

AN ANALYSIS OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENTAL INFLUENCES ON THE
PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY-NAVY AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE FUTURE

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirement for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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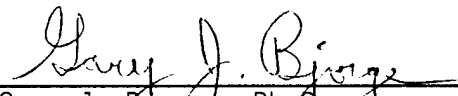
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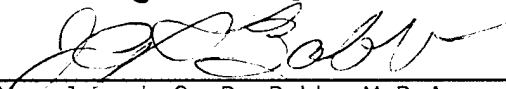
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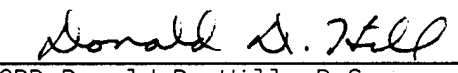
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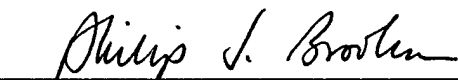
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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENTAL INFLUENCES ON THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY-NAVY AND THEIR IMPLICATION FOR THE FUTURE by LCDR John R. O'Donnell, USN, 112 pages.

This study examines the development of the navy of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the various influences that have shaped Chinese maritime capabilities. Since 1949, the People's Liberation Army-Navy (PLAN) has grown from a small collection of surface vessels to a major regional navy with significant air, surface, and subsurface capabilities. Throughout its history, the PLAN was subjected to developmental influences that can be categorized as strategic, political, economic, and institutional. The effects these previous influences had on the PLAN can be used as a guide to determine how current influences will affect the PLAN in the next twenty-five years.

In the past fifteen years, these developmental influences on the PLAN have changed dramatically. Currently the PLAN is changing in response to a lack of a superpower threat, China's continuing quest to recover "lost" territories in the South and East China Seas, the reduction of political interference in military affairs, the PRC's growing economy, the growth of the PRC's coastal regions, expanding international trade, and the PRC's offshore resource development. Also the PLAN has minimized its historical subordination to the army. Together, these influences forecast a modern, capable, and independent navy that will become a dominant presence in the waters surrounding China's island claims.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| AAW | Anti-air warfare |
| ARL | Repair ship-landing craft |
| ASW | Anti-submarine warfare |
| ASUW | Anti-surface warfare |
| CCP | Chinese Communist Party |
| CMC | Central Military Commission |
| DD | Destroyer |
| DDG | Guided missile destroyer |
| DIA | Defense Intelligence Agency (U.S.) |
| ECM | Electromagnetic Counter Measure |
| EEZ | Exclusive Economic Zone |
| FA | Field Army |
| FBIS | Foreign Broadcast Information Service |
| FFG | Guided missile frigate |
| GNP | Gross National Product |
| JMSDF | Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force |
| LSM | Medium landing ship |
| LST | Tank landing ship |
| MR | Military Region |
| PLA | People's Liberation Army (can refer to the entire military or simply the ground forces) |
| PLAAF | People's Liberation Army Air Force |

| | |
|--------|---|
| PLAN | People's Liberation Army-Navy |
| PLANAF | People's Liberation Army-Naval Air Force |
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| ROC | Republic of China |
| ROK | Republic of Korea |
| SEZ | Special Economic Zone |
| SLOC | Sea Line of Communication |
| SS | Attack submarine |
| SSB | Ballistic missile submarine (diesel-electric) |
| SSBN | Ballistic missile submarine (nuclear powered) |
| SSG | Guided missile attack submarine |
| SSN | Attack submarine (nuclear powered) |
| SSM | Surface to surface missile |
| UNCLOS | United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea |
| USN | United States Navy |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the development of the naval forces of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the various influences that have shaped the formation of a maritime capability. The purpose is to identify the major developmental influences and determine how they may influence the future of the Chinese naval forces. These forces, a branch of the Chinese army, are known as the People's Liberation Army (Navy) or PLAN. During its first 45 years of existence, the PLAN has grown from a collection of obsolescent ships to a modern and reasonably capable coastal navy. This development has been spasmodic. Only since the 1980s has the PLAN been able to maintain a period of continuous growth.

The primary research question is, how have certain influences affected the development of the PLAN and what do they mean for the PLAN's future? Although the PRC is a major regional power, its navy has been primarily a coastal defense force. This coastal navy developed in response to a variety of influences that for ease of analysis have been categorized into strategic, political, economic, and institutional. The future of the PLAN will be determined by the impact of these influences.

Strategic Influences

Events, policies, and strategies occurring at the international level that have affected the PLAN are defined as strategic influences. Among these strategic influences are superpower threats in the region, Asian geopolitics, and Asian naval modernization programs. For the first 40 years of the PLAN's history, the threat of superpower action was the dominant strategic influence on the PLAN. Since the fall of the Soviet Union the influence of Asian geopolitics and Asian naval modernization programs has increased.

Superpower Threat

The two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, were key strategic influences on the PLAN. The fear of one or both of these two superpowers was a significant reason for the PLAN's defensive orientation for the first thirty years of its existence. This superpower threat consisted of attempts to encircle the PRC. As this encirclement involved superpower naval forces, the PLAN was affected.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the United States was the main threat to the PRC. The U.S. was seen as attempting to encircle the PRC through their support of countries such as South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Philippines, South Vietnam, and Thailand. Because of this national enmity, the United States Navy (USN) was viewed as the PLAN's most likely enemy.

In the 1970s and early 1980s this view was reversed as an expansionist Soviet Union became the PRC's main threat. Additionally, the Soviet Pacific Fleet expanded during the 1970s and 1980s, and became the new perceived encircling force. Soviet naval deployments and the

establishment of a Soviet naval base in Vietnam were viewed by the Chinese with concern.

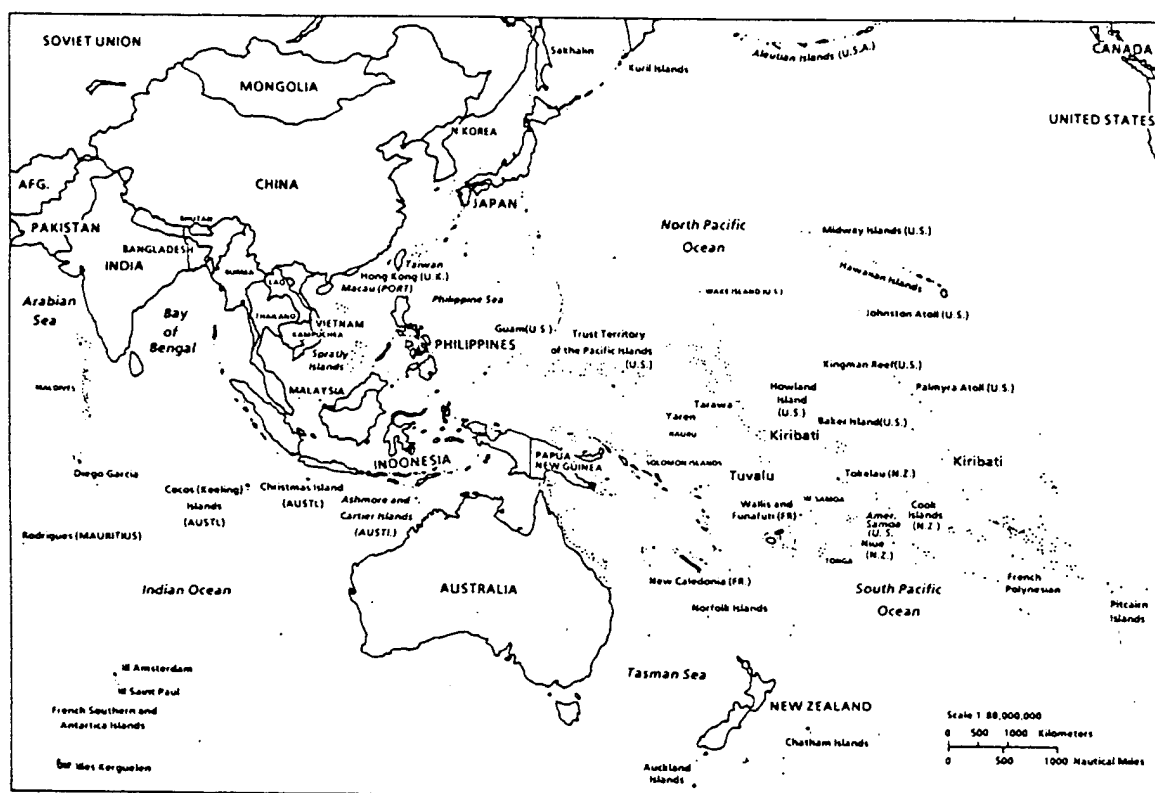


Figure 1. The Pacific Basin. Reprinted, by permission, from Dora Alves, Cooperative Security in the Pacific Basin: The 1988 Pacific Symposium (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1990), XIV.

The withdrawal of the superpowers from the region also affected the PLAN. The Russian Pacific Fleet dramatically cut its operating tempo, and is no longer a force in the region. The United States Pacific Fleet lost its major regional base, Subic Bay, and has reduced its presence in the Western Pacific. This reduced threat should be reflected in reduced naval expenditures. That these expenditures are now rising indicates that influences other than strategic ones are at

work. The weakened superpower naval presence in Asia has allowed the PLAN to shed its defensive orientation and focus on operations against other regional navies.

Asian Geopolitics

Throughout its history, the PLAN has been influenced by two geopolitical considerations. These influences are the PRC's quest for secure borders and the PRC's claim on what are seen as historic Chinese lands (including offshore islands). Figure 1 shows the PRC's geographical position in the Pacific area.

The issue of permanent, secure borders is important to any nation, and the PRC is no exception. The PRC's eastern border is a maritime one. Running from Korea Bay to the Gulf of Tonkin, this coastline is almost 3,000 miles long.¹ To secure this eastern border, the PLAN was designed to be the "Great Wall at Sea." The PRC has used its naval forces (mostly in the 1950s) to secure this eastern border.

The PRC's claim to the historic Chinese lands dates to the Chinese Empire in the mid to late 19th Century. This "historic China" consists of the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, various islands around Taiwan, and numerous islands and islets in the South China Sea. The PLAN has been involved in three combat actions since 1949 in efforts to recover these territories (Senkaku Islands in the early 1970s, Paracel Islands in 1974, and the Spratly Islands in 1988).

The issue of the "offshore claims" in the East and South China Seas is drawing more attention, as these areas are believed to contain large oil reserves. These offshore claims include the Spratly and Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, and Taiwan and the Senkaku

(Diaoyu) Islands in the East China Sea (Figure 2). Parts of the Spratly and Paracel islands are also claimed by Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei. The PRC's offshore claims were formalized on 25 February 1992, when the National People's Congress passed the Law of the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone.

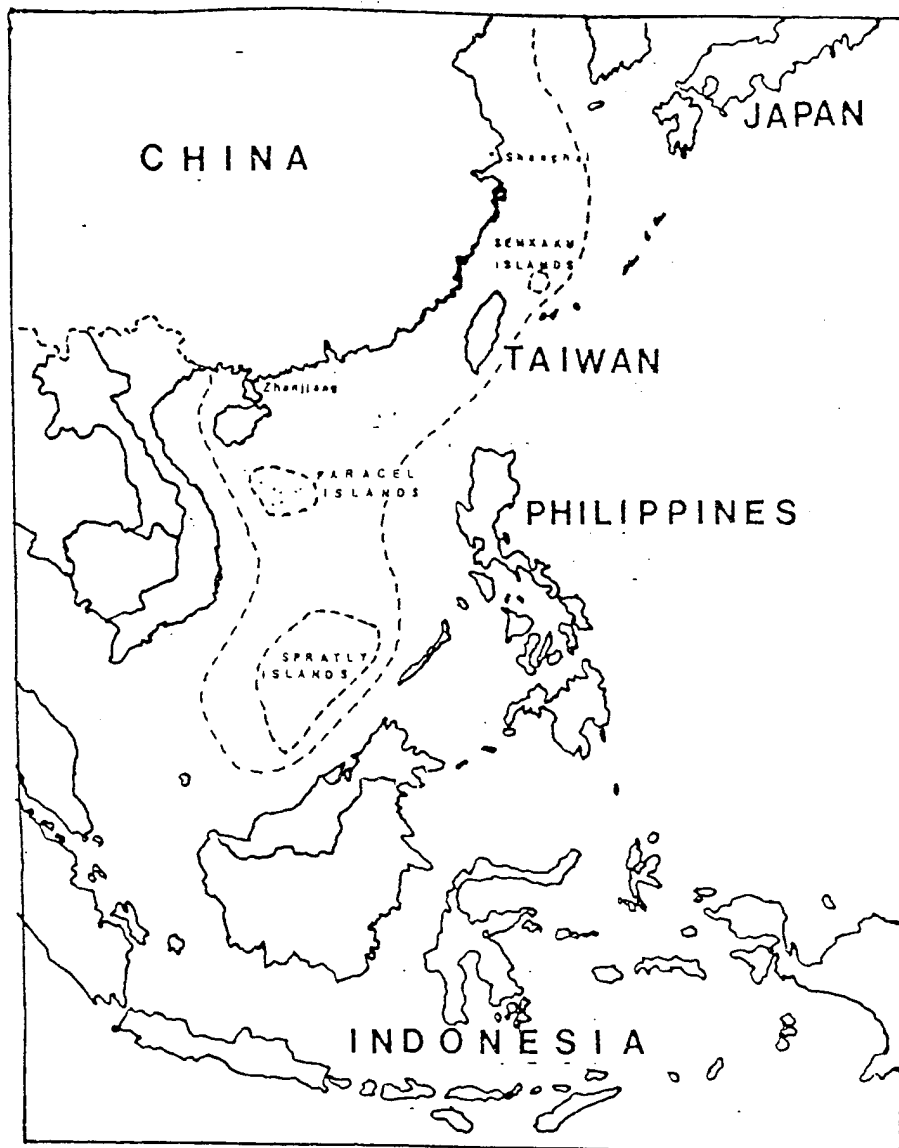


Figure 2. The PRC's Offshore Claims.

Naval Competition in Asia

The third strategic influence on the PLAN has been the naval development programs of China's neighbors. In the post-Cold War world regional navies have become more of an interest to the PLAN. Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and Singapore are upgrading their naval forces.

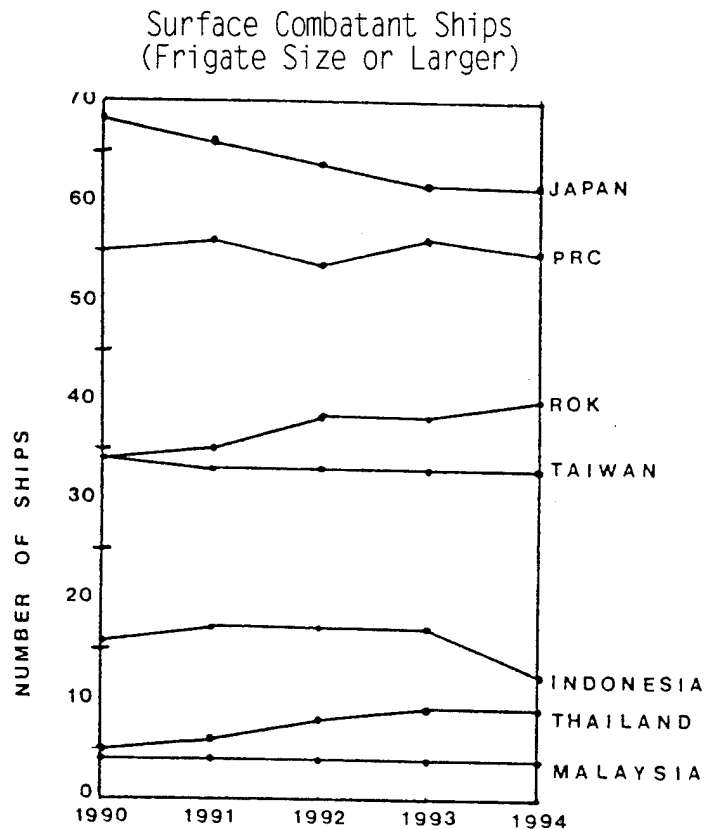


Figure 3. Surface Combatants of the Major Asian Navies. Data from The Military Balance (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1990 through 1994).

Figure 3 shows the status of a selected segment of the major navies in post-Cold War Asia. As shown in the figure, only the Republic of Korea (ROK) has significantly increased its number of major surface

combatants since 1990. The trends evident in Figure 3 are also applicable to their navies as a whole. However, Figure 3 does not show the advance in capabilities as newer platforms replace older ones. Taiwan has leased six Knox class frigates from the U.S., replacing aging Korean War era destroyers. The Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) is building some of the world's most technologically advanced ships such as the KONGO class guided missile destroyer.

Table 1.--Asian Surface Combatant Ships (Frigate Size or Larger)

| COUNTRY | AVERAGE AGE 1990 (YEARS) | RANKING (1990) | AVERAGE AGE 1994 (YEARS) | RANKING (1994) |
|-----------|--------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| MALAYSIA | 10.50 | 1 | 15.50 | 3 |
| JAPAN | 11.74 | 2 | 14.69 | 2 |
| INDIA | 13.10 | 3 | 15.67 | 4 |
| ROK | 13.18 | 4 | 16.15 | 5 |
| PRC | 14.68 | 5 | 11.69 | 1 |
| INDONESIA | 23.00 | 6 | 21.08 | 7 |
| THAILAND | 31.83 | 7 | 19.70 | 6 |
| TAIWAN | 43.86 | 8 | 44.45 | 8 |

Data from The Military Balance (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1990 through 1994).

Using age of a ship alone as an indication of its combat capability, the PLAN has made significant progress in the 1990s towards developing a modern combat capable navy. Table 1 shows the average age and age ranking (newest to oldest) of surface combatant ships for the major Asian navies. Significantly, the PLAN advanced from the ranking

of fifth among major Asian navies to first in a span of five years. Every one of these Asian navies was able to minimize the ageing of their surface combatant force through acquisitions and construction. Additionally, Thailand and Indonesia showed a decreasing age trend. The advanced age of the Taiwanese surface combatant force will decline significantly in the next few years as Taiwan retires some of the 28 World War II era destroyers still in the inventory.

Political Influences

Political influences are as those resulting from the military's and specifically the PLAN's role in domestic Chinese politics. Key to this influence is understanding the military - Chinese Communist Party (CCP) relationship. The CCP has always wanted to ensure its control over the military while minimizing the PLA's influence in politics and governmental affairs. The PLA, on the other hand, has wanted to minimize political influence in military affairs.

The CCP's influence over the military and the military's intervention in domestic politics both peaked during the Cultural Revolution. Since then, the political influence on the military and the role of the military in local and national politics have both declined. The declining role of the military in politics is evidenced by the steady decline of military representation in the CCP Central Committee Politburo since the Cultural Revolution. Today the Politburo has only one military member, Liu Huaqing. Liu was also a former commander of the PLAN (1982-1987). Conversely, the CCP's politicization of the military has declined from a peak achieved during the Cultural Revolution. This is evidenced by the reduced military involvement in

mass movements / political work and the political leaders' current emphasis on military professionalism.

The second political issue was ideological and revolved around the strategy and doctrine of the military. The military, especially the technically oriented branches (PLAN and the People's Liberation Army Air Force or PLAAF), wanted to develop a professional military as a result of lessons learned in the Korean War. The CCP and Mao Zedong wanted to continue the doctrine of the "People's War" and placed great faith in massed forces motivated by political education and indoctrination. Only after Mao died, did the PRC start to move away from the "People's War" doctrine. This first modification was called "People's War under Modern Conditions." The struggle between professionalism and politically radicalized mass armies continues today, albeit on a smaller scale.

Economic Influences

The effect that the nature and scope of the PRC's national economy had on the PLAN's development are defined as economic influences. Throughout most of its history, PLAN development was constrained by a weak national economy. Recent PRC economic liberalization has resulted in a growing, dynamic economy that no longer acts as a hinderance to the PLAN's development. Table 2 show the growth rate of China's Gross National Product (GNP) during selected historical periods. This table shows the dramatic difference in growth resulting from economic liberalization. This growing economy will be better able to support the large capital cost required of a modern naval force. A healthy economy can develop the infrastructure and technology required by a navy and investment in the navy will aid economic development.

The second economic influence is the geographical distribution of economic development. In the 1980s, the PRC began designating certain coastal regions as Special Economic Zones (SEZs). An SEZ is a region where foreign investment and development is encouraged. The increasing dependence upon these coastal economic zones has in part forced a shift in the PRC's military strategy towards a more forward oriented defense. As these SEZs have grown in importance, so has the importance of the PLAN.

Table 2

PRC's Gross National Product (GNP)

| PERIOD | GROWTH RATE (PERCENT) |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| 1952-1960 | 6.0 |
| 1960-1965 | 4.7 |
| 1965-1972 | 5.7 |
| 1980-1989 | 9.3 |
| 1993 | 13.0 |

Source: Jonathan Spence, The Search for Modern China (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 670; William Overholt, The Rise of China (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 30; Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report: China and Mongolia (London: Economist Intelligence Unit Ltd., 1994), 23.

Another economic influence is the growing competition for ocean resources. Competition for ocean resources, such as oil, minerals, and marine life will force countries to strictly enforce their maritime

claims. If the PRC wishes to enforce a 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the PLAN would have to expand the number of ships and patrol aircraft. Possible oil deposits have exacerbated the territorial disputes in the South China Sea region.

Institutional Influences

The term institutional influences is used to describe the influence that the PRC's military structure has had on the PLAN. As a subordinate organization, the PLAN has been strongly influenced by the People's Liberation Army (PLA). PLA officers and soldiers were used to man the fledgling navy. This meant that the PLA's influence had been felt in all areas of the PLAN, but especially the areas of naval strategy and doctrine.

As these army personnel were transferred to the PLAN, they brought with them intra-army rivalries. In the formation of the PLAN, most personnel came from the Third Field Army. This was a rather new army which did not have the influence of the older Eighth Route Army or the New Fourth Army. The PLAN lacked the political influence because its key leaders were not from the same units as the PLA's leaders. This intra-army problem diminishes, as the Civil War leaders pass from the scene. As these Civil War allegiances disappear, new service connected factions have emerged.

The second institutional influence has been the role of the Minister of Defense, a key position in the Chinese military structure. Both Peng Dehuai (1954-1959) and Lin Biao (1959-1971) had an enormous

influence on the PLAN. Between Lin Biao and the early 1990s, there is little evidence of the Minister of Defense's influence on the PLAN. In 1992, a former commander of the PLAN was appointed as Minister of Defense. This man, Liu Huaqing, brought nearly forty years of naval experience to the Defense Minister post.

Scope and Limitations

This study begins with a discussion of the formation of the PLAN and goes on to explain how the strategic, economic, political, and institutional influences just described have affected the PLAN. The force structure, missions, capabilities and limitations of the surface, naval aviation, subsurface, and amphibious forces will be included in this research. Amphibious forces will be viewed from the naval perspective and will not involve an in depth review of the Chinese Naval Infantry's land war fighting capabilities.

This research must necessarily be limited in order to focus on the key issues that have and continue to influence the PLAN. Although, China has had a long maritime tradition prior to 1949, this study will be limited to the Chinese Communist Navy. The discussion of the PLAN will be limited to conventional forces only as the issue of PLAN strategic nuclear capabilities and deterrence is too lengthy to include in this research.

Significance

The study of the PLAN is especially relevant today. The PRC is important to world and regional security, and its navy will play a vital role in the PRC's emergence as a major power. There are four basic

reasons why this study is important. First, the PLAN is numerically the world's third largest navy. Table 3 shows the major vessels of the PLAN. Additionally, the air component of the PLAN consists of over 840 aircraft. Although not as technologically advanced as other Asian navies, the PLAN is a major naval force. In manpower terms, the PLAN is larger than the maritime forces (navy and marine) of Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia combined.²

Table 3.--PLAN's Composition by Ship Type

| SHIP TYPE | QUANTITY |
|--|-------------|
| BALLISTIC MISSILE SUBMARINE (NUCLEAR POWERED) | 1 |
| ATTACK SUBMARINE | 96 (NOTE 1) |
| DESTROYER | 17 |
| FRIGATE | 34 |
| FAST ATTACK CRAFT | 799 |
| AMPHIBIOUS SHIPS | 35 |
| MINE WARFARE SHIPS | 63 |
| REPLENISHMENT OILER | 2 |

Note: 50 "R" class submarines are believed to be non-operational

Source: Bernard Prezelin ed., Combat Fleets of the World 1993: Their Ships, Aircraft, and Armament (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1993), 87-105.

Secondly, the PLAN operates in or near some of the world's most vital sea lines of communications (SLOCs). The PRC's disputes with its neighbors over offshore islands directly impact the vital SLOCs through the Straits of Malacca and Lombok Straits. Through these straits pass

much of the Pacific's commercial traffic including the majority of the oil flowing to the United States' major regional ally, Japan.

While the U.S. Navy's presence in Asia has declined, the United States still has many interests in the area. The U.S. has major defense treaties and relationships with Japan, South Korea, Philippines, and several other Southeast Asian countries. In addition to defense commitments, the United States has an important economic interest in the region. Thirty-seven percent of U.S. trade is with Asia. This trade is nearly three times U.S. trade with Latin America and double the trade with the European Union.³ To ensure adequate protection of these interests with limited resources, the U.S. must understand the PLAN.

Additionally, this study is important simply because of the relative lack of information on the PLAN. Much is known about the various fleets of the world but little about the PLAN. Most studies on the PLAN were completed during the Cold War and reflect bi-polar strategic thinking. This study endeavors to expand and update the field of knowledge on the PLAN.

Organization

This analysis of the PLAN is divided by historical periods in its development. Chapter Two covers the PLAN's history up through the break with the Soviet Union. Chapter Three encompasses the era when Lin Biao was Minister of Defense. Chapter Four covers the transition period from Lin's death until the ascendancy of Liu Huaqing to the leadership of the PLAN. Chapter Five describes developments in the PLAN since 1982. Chapter Six will summarize the history of the influences on the PLAN and discuss how current influences will affect the PLAN's future.

CHAPTER TWO
THE GREAT WALL AT SEA:
DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN THROUGH 1959

This chapter examines the initial period of the PLAN's development through the Great Leap Forward. This era was marked by rapid naval expansion sponsored by the Soviet Union. In addition to this growth, the PLAN was occupied with the development of command structure, infrastructure, strategy, and doctrine. Operationally the PLAN was employed frequently against the Nationalist naval forces based on Taiwan.

Events Leading to the Formation of the PLAN

The evolution of the PLAN began at the end of World War II. The Soviet Union provided the initial impetus for a Communist Chinese navy, when they transferred several ex-Japanese gunboats to the PLA. In late 1946 the Soviets established the Democratic Naval Academy at Dalian, part of Soviet occupied Liandong peninsula (Figure 4). This academy provided Soviet led instruction for future naval officers. A similar school for enlisted personnel was also established at Jiamusi, close to the Soviet-Manchurian border.¹

Efforts to construct a Chinese Communist navy began in northeast China partially as a result of aid provided by the Soviets who were then occupying Manchuria and the Liaodong Peninsula. The first Communist

naval organization, the Northeast Navy, was established in November 1948. This command was not an operational headquarters, but rather an administrative center for the naval training activities in Manchuria and the Liaodong peninsula.²

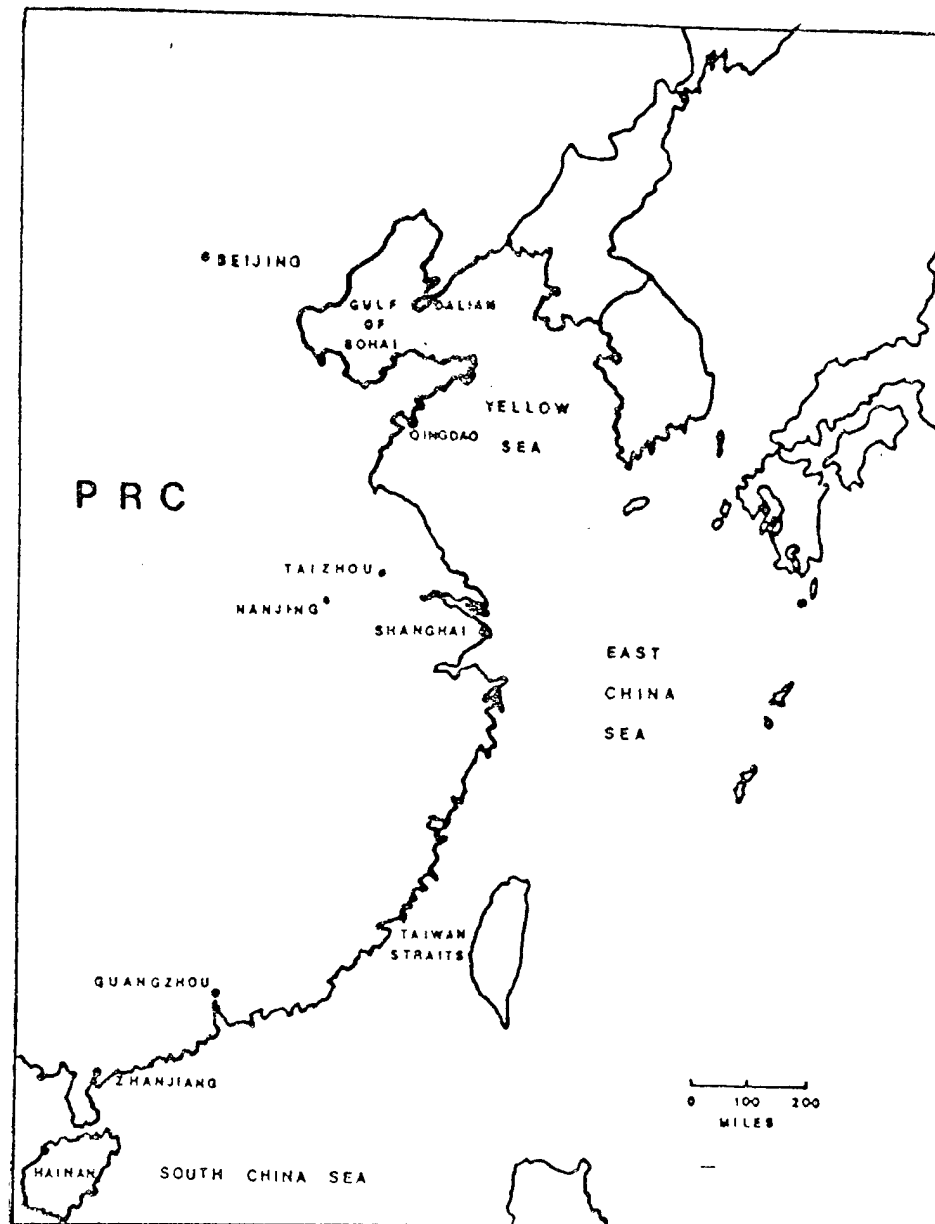


Figure 4. China's Maritime Border

In February 1949, Nationalist ships began defecting to the Communists. The most symbolic of the defections occurred in the north when the flagship and pride of the Nationalist navy defected at Huludao in March of 1949. This ship, the light cruiser Chongqing (ex-HMS Aurora), was later sunk at anchor by Nationalist air planes.³

The most important defection to the future of the PLAN occurred along the east-central coast of China. On 23 April 1949, virtually the entire Nationalist Second Coastal Defense Fleet defected to the Communist side at Nanjing (Figure 4).⁴ This fleet of 25 vessels ranging in size from landing craft to destroyers, represented about 25% of Nationalist naval strength at the time.⁵ At the time of its defection, the Second Coastal Defense Fleet was on the Yangtze River. On the same day the first operationally oriented naval unit, the East China Military Region Navy, established its headquarters in Taizhou, Jiangsu province (Figure 4). The relationship between these two events is uncertain. However, Taizhou and Nanjing are only about 45 miles apart and both cities are on or connected by water to the Yangtze. It is easy to surmise that the establishment of the naval headquarters was a quick response by the PLA to manage its newly acquired naval force. Regardless of the relationship, 23 April 1949 is considered the birth of the PLAN.

The first commander and political commissar of the East China Military Region Navy was an army general, Zhang Aiping. Prior to assuming these posts, Zhang was a deputy corps commander in the Third Field Army.⁶ The Third Field Army was fighting the Nationalists in the area at the time that the headquarters was established. To man this

naval force, Third Field Army personnel were assigned to the East China Military Region Navy.⁷ Figure 5 shows the location of the five Field Armies at the conclusion of the Civil War and the current naval organization. The East China Military Region Navy headquarters was later relocated to Shanghai and eventually renamed the East Sea Fleet.⁸ The relationship between these Field Armies is key to understanding PLAN-PLA politics especially in the first decades of the PRC's history.

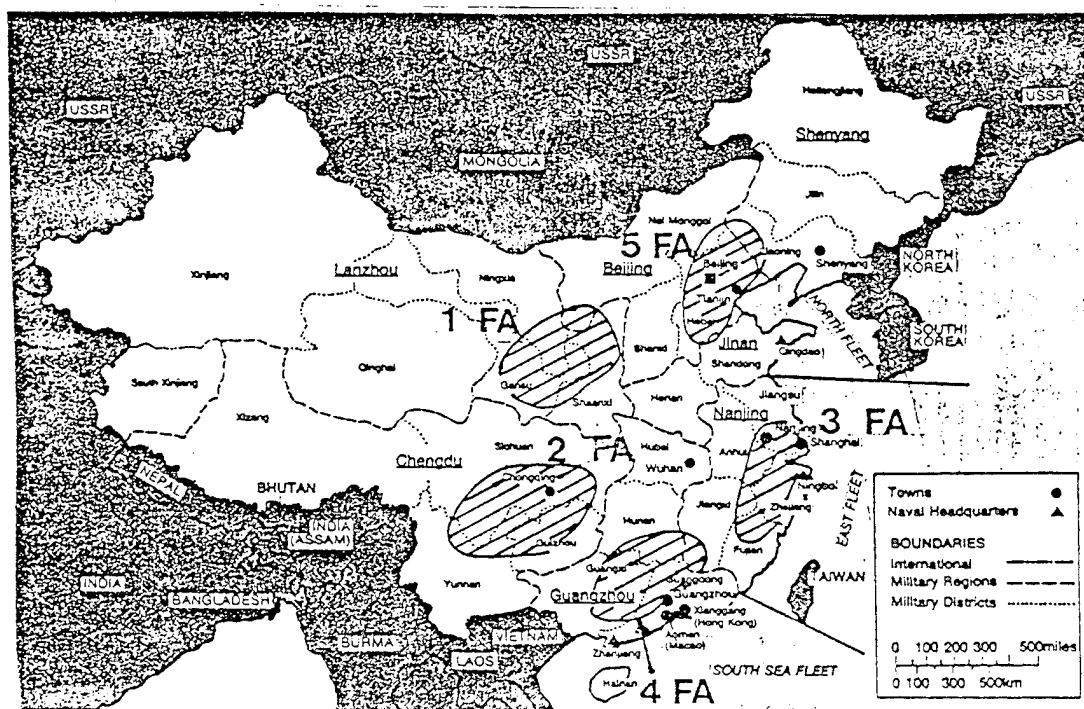


Figure 5. Generalized Field Army Locations in January 1950 in relation to the PLAN's present geographical divisions. Map reproduced, by permission, from The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance: 1992-1993 (London: Brassey's, 1992), 149.

With the bulk of the operational naval forces, the East China Military Region Navy took the lead in developing a naval strategy.

Zhang Aiping convened a naval planning conference on 9 July 1949. This conference set four tasks. The first task was to organize and regulate the fledgling naval force. The second task was to conduct political reeducation of the many former Nationalist naval personnel. The third was the repair of damaged or deteriorating ships and facilities. The last task was to establish naval schools.⁹ The goals of this new navy as defined by Zhang, were:

to build up a skeleton naval arm to be used as a basis for the creation of a powerful People's Navy of the future, in order to destroy the sea blockade of liberated China, to support the land and air forces of the PLA in defense of Chinese soil, and to wipe out all remnants of the reactionary forces.¹⁰

Organization of the Communist navy in southern China took longer. It was not until 15 December 1949, that the Guangdong Military District Riverine Defense Command was established. The deputy commander of the Guangdong Military Region, Hong Xueshi, became the Riverine Defense Command's first commander. Personnel for this force were drawn from minor naval commands and flotillas in the region and the Fourth Field Army.¹¹

The Beginning (1950)

In 1950, the Chinese began to transform the regional naval forces and facilities into a national force. The East China Military Region Navy, the Guangdong Military District Riverine Defense Command, and the various organizations in northeast China formed the basis of the PLAN's operating fleet headquarters. A national naval headquarters was established in Beijing on April 14, 1950 with Xiao Jinguang as the first PLAN commander.

A long-time friend and political ally of Mao Zedong, Xiao Jinguang, was an army officer with no naval experience prior to assuming the position. Like Mao a native of Hunan province, Xiao had been Mao's friend since the age of seventeen. He had studied in Moscow for four years, was a veteran of the Long March of 1934-1935, and was deputy commander of Lin Biao's Fourth Field Army prior to assuming the navy position.¹² Xiao was a strong Maoist who believed in a strong coastal defense strategy. Soviet assistance was very important to the PLAN and Xiao was selected in part for his fluency in Russian. Thus, Xiao had the right political and ideological qualifications for the assignment.¹³

Post Civil War army troop distribution affected the composition of the PLAN. Naval forces drew army personnel from collocated field armies (Figure 5). Appointees to the East China Military Region Navy came from the Third Field Army.¹⁴ Fourth Field Army provided most of the personnel to the Northeast Fleet and the Guangdong Military District Riverine Defense Command headquarters. Elements of the Fourth Field Army also provided the original composition of the PLAN's headquarters in Beijing.¹⁵

The PLAN began with a collection of Nationalist ships that were either captured by the PLA or were turned over to the Communists by their defecting crews. These ships and craft were of American, English, or Japanese origin. Ships of the newly created PLAN were all relatively small. The largest operational ship was a destroyer escort displacing 1,020 tons.¹⁶ In 1950, the PLAN consisted of a light cruiser (non-operational), four destroyer escorts, seventeen gunboats, one

minesweeper, three motor gunboats, twelve patrol vessels, and several transports, auxiliaries, and landing craft.¹⁷

The PLAN's manpower began with a mixture of former Nationalist sailors and PLA soldiers. Because of the technological skills required to maintain and operate a navy, the PLAN was forced to retain some former Nationalist sailors. Political reeducation was required before they could be trusted. One of Zhang Aiping's original goals was the reeducation of these sailors. As discussed earlier, the Third and Fourth Field Armies provided personnel for the early PLAN. These personnel required substantial training before they could become competent mariners.

In 1950 several major naval schools were opened to train these people. On August 24th, the Naval Fast Attack Craft School and the Naval Artillery School opened in Qingdao. The artillery school was founded in part by members of an artillery division of the Fourth Field Army. On 31 October 1950, the First Naval Aviation School was formed in Qingdao. It is later combined with a second aviation school to become the Naval Aviation School.¹⁸

The PLAN pursued an aggressive policy of recovering and restoring its naval capabilities with limited resources. With Soviet aid the Dalian-Port Arthur complex was enlarged with more capable piers, new warehouses, expanded anchorage areas, increased storage facilities, and refurbished machine shops and dry dock facilities. In Qingdao, the facilities left by the U.S. Navy were augmented by new construction. Repair facilities in Jiangnan as well as a torpedo factory and naval arsenal were made operational.¹⁹

The PLAN attempted the repair or modification of vessels with varying degrees of success. The cruiser Chongqing was refloated in 1951, but was never fully restored and was scrapped in the mid-1950s.²⁰ An ex-Canadian and two ex-British corvettes previously converted to merchant vessels were rearmed and refurbished as combatants by the PLAN.²¹ The repair ship Taku Shan (ex-USS Achilles (ARL-41)) which had burned and grounded in 1949 was restored to operational status.

Soviet naval assistance expanded in 1950. The Soviet Naval Advisory Mission was established early in 1950. Initially the group of Soviet naval advisors numbered around 500 with 100 remaining at the PLAN's headquarters and the rest being distributed among the fleet units.²² In July, the first Soviet shipments of replacement parts for ships inherited from the Guomindang arrived. The Soviets also provided assistance in the effort to restore the Chongqing.²³ Three years later, the Soviet Naval Advisory Mission numbered between 1,500 and 2,000 and had a presence in virtually every ship and tactical unit in the PLAN.²⁴

Despite the urgent need to consolidate, organize, and train, the PLAN was thrown into initial efforts to secure the PRC's eastern maritime border. Early amphibious operations to consolidate the coastal islands under Communist control revealed serious deficiencies. In March of 1950, the PLA conducted an amphibious assault on the island of Hainan. Hainan is only 15 miles from the mainland at its closest point. Over 500 soldiers drowned when rafts being towed by motorized junks capsized during transit.²⁵ The early amphibious operations were conducted more like river crossings and clearly demonstrated the need

for improved tactics before attempting an invasion of Taiwan across the 100 mile wide Taiwan Strait.

Preparations for such an invasion were well advanced by June 1950. The Third Field Army had built up supply and transportation assets to sustain a crossing of the Taiwan Strait.²⁶ Army units were being trained in amphibious warfare by naval officers.²⁷ The 25 June invasion of South Korea and the subsequent positioning of the United States' Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Straits ended these invasion plans.

Early Strategy

The PRC's predominant strategic concern early in its history was to defend the nation and its Communist revolution from attack. The PLAN was important for it was to secure China's maritime border and extend Communist control to the off-shore islands. In a September 21, 1949 speech to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Mao Zedong had declared:

Our national defense will be consolidated, and no imperialist will be allowed to invade our territory again. Our people's armed forces must be preserved and developed with the heroic and tested People's Liberation Army as its foundation. We will not only have a powerful army but also a powerful air force and a powerful navy.²⁸

In January of 1950, Mao also described his view on the importance of the PLAN: "We must build a navy. This navy must be able to secure our coastal defense and effectively protect us against possible aggression by the imperialists."²⁹

Constraining this desire for a strong navy was the devastation of the Chinese economy. The modernization of the PLA and the PLAN was not a high priority of the Chinese leadership immediately after taking power in 1949. The PRC leadership's main concerns were establishing a

workable administrative organization, curbing inflation, and rebuilding domestic industry.³⁰ Even before the official declaration establishing the PRC, its leaders were looking to demobilize the PLA to concentrate on rebuilding the nation.³¹

In addition to the efforts to gain control of the coastal islands and Taiwan, the PRC began an early campaign to recover islands further out in the East and South China Seas. Only two years after the founding of their country, the PRC started to lay claim to the various islets and reefs of the Spratly Islands. In the 1951 peace treaty between Japan and the United States, Japan renounced all claims to the islands of the South China Sea. The peace treaty did not mention who in fact owned these islands and on 15 August 1951, the PRC claimed the Spratly Islands, the Paracel Islands, and other reefs and islets of the South China Sea as an historic part of China.³² Without the means to enforce these claims, the PRC nonetheless had established an important legal foothold in these islands. Since then, these island claims have continued to influence the PLAN.

Developments During the Korean War

The PLAN did not significantly participate in the Korean War but was busy developing its organization. On 13 October 1951, the Central Military Commission clarified the relationship between each of the regional navies, the Military Regions with naval forces, and the Navy Headquarters. The Military Region was given combat command of the regional navies, while the Navy Headquarters in Beijing had primarily an "organizational leadership relationship."³³ This cemented the PLAN's role as a supporting force to the army.

In December 1951, Xiao Jinguang outlined his "Three Pillars" on which to develop the PLAN. These pillars were, "to build politically and ideologically, to build organizationally, to build technologically."³⁴ It is significant that Xiao placed political and ideological growth ahead of technological advancement. Xiao was a strong believer in political orthodoxy over technical competence, which probably explained why he survived as the PLAN's commander for thirty years.

Also during the Korean War, the People's Liberation Army-Naval Air Force (PLANAF) was formed in April of 1952 with Dun Xingyun as its first commander. The 1st Division of the PLANAF was activated in Shanghai on 27 June 1952. The unit was formed with personnel from the first classes from the Naval Aviation School along with a regiment from the army and one from the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF).³⁵ Early planes were all propeller driven and it was not until 1955 that the PLANAF received its first jet aircraft.

Influence of the Korean War

Although not a major participant in the Korean War, the PLAN was significantly influenced by it. By causing the delay and eventually the cancellation of the planned invasion of Taiwan, the Korean War allowed the Nationalist forces on Taiwan to recover from their recent defeat on the mainland. Taiwan received massive U.S. aid and rebuilt its navy, thereby becoming a significant threat to China's eastern border. In 1953, Mao stated, "In the past, when imperialists invaded our country, in most cases they came from the sea. Even now, the Pacific Ocean is

not at all Pacific. We ought to have a strong navy."³⁶ Mao also called for turning the coastline into a "Great Wall on the Sea."³⁷

The Korean War also reduced the resources available for expanding and modernizing the PLAN. On 14 February 1952, Mao and Xiao Jinguang agreed to shift funds from ship construction to the PLAAF to help build more aircraft for use in Korea.³⁸ Only with Soviet assistance was the PLAN able to grow during this period (Table 4). It was not until after the war that the PRC could restore naval development programs.

The Korean war also demonstrated to the PRC leadership the value of sea power. Merchant shipping, escorted by naval forces, provided the logistic support to the United Nations land and air forces. Aircraft carriers off the Korean coast launched air strikes at will against the Communist forces. Also, U.S. amphibious capability, as demonstrated at Inchon showed the Chinese the utility of a modern, trained amphibious force. A statement attributed to Mao surfaced in 1954: "Our failure to win a decisive victory in Korea is attributed to our poor naval force."³⁹

Era of Professionalism and Soviet Influence (1953-1959)

The period following the Korean War was the peak of Sino-Soviet naval cooperation. This cooperation consisted primarily of material, technological, and ideological transfers. These transfers were instrumental in the early development of the PLAN. The post-Korean War leader of the PLA, Peng Dehuai, envisioned a Chinese military based upon the Soviet model.

The Soviets provided the PLAN a variety of surface combatants and submarines. The majority of these vessels were transferred between 1953 and 1959. Table 4 lists the major Soviet naval transfers to the PLAN. After 1955, Soviet assistance was aimed at developing the PRC's ship construction capabilities.⁴⁰

TABLE 4.--MAJOR SOVIET NAVAL TRANSFERS TO THE PLAN

| SHIP CLASS | QUANTITY | DATE RECEIVED |
|------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| S-1 SUBMARINE | 2 2 | MAY, 1954 JUNE, 1955 |
| MIKE SUBMARINE | 1 | JULY, 1953 |
| MIKE V SUBMARINE | 2 2 | OCTOBER, 1954 JUNE, 1955 |
| GORDY DESTROYER | 2 2 | OCTOBER, 1954 JUNE, 1955 |
| P-4 MOTOR TORPEDO BOAT | 50 | 1951 |
| T 43 MINESWEEPER | 2 | OCTOBER, 1954 |

Source: David G. Muller, China as a Maritime Power, 28-32.

With Soviet aid, the PRC developed a shipbuilding industry. The shipbuilding program emphasized construction of small and medium units as well as submarines.⁴¹ The Soviets also assisted in the development of ship repair facilities and submarine construction technology. In 1956, Chinese yards began assembling "W" class diesel-electric submarines from Soviet made parts. With Soviet assistance, the Chinese began construction in the late 1950s of one "G" class diesel-electric ballistic missile submarine.⁴²

The transfer of Soviet naval thought to the PLAN was just as important as material and technology transfers to the PLAN's development. During the mid to late 1950s the Soviet Navy shifted their emphasis away from a big ship Stalinist navy to one that emphasized fast attack craft, submarines, guided missiles, and aircraft to deter blockade of the homeland. This doctrine of thought was called the "Young School." The "Young School" naval doctrine had also been popular in the 1920s and 1930s when Xiao Jinguang studied in Moscow. If he was exposed to any naval doctrine during his training it was most probably this "Young School." Also the PLAN's limited naval expertise and the presence of Soviet naval advisors at all levels of the PLAN, it is no surprise that the PLAN adopted this "Young School" type of naval doctrine. In 1958, the CCP Central Military Commission approved "A Resolution on Building the Navy." This resolution stated that:

The Navy takes the development of submarines as its focal point, with a corresponding development of necessary surface ships. No matter whether the development is for submarines or surface ships, it should especially emphasize the use of new technologies, such as guided missiles and atomic propulsion.⁴³

This emphasis on submarine development parallels the "Young School" doctrine and would be a primary pattern in the PLAN's development for the next two decades.

Defense Reorganization and Peng Dehuai

As leader of the PLA, Peng Dehuai had a larger influence on the professionalism of the PLAN than Xiao Jinguang. In 1954 Peng became the First Vice-Chairman of the CCP Central Committee's Military Commission. This position is in practice the head of the PLA. Previously, Peng had led the Chinese troops in Korea and was convinced of the need for

modernization. Peng strove for a professional not a revolutionary army and used the Soviets as a model. He started reforms which were latter known as the "Four Great Systems." These systems were: the Compulsory Military System, the System of Military Ranks, the Salary System, and the Order of Merit System.⁴⁴

Peng's reform efforts were implemented in 1955. A conscription law was enacted in February of that year. This ensured a steady flow of new sailors and allowed the PLAN to keep them for five years (opposed to three and four years for the PLA and PLAAF respectively).⁴⁵ is five year commitment helped the PLAN maintain a professional trained force. That same month, a rank system as well as a salary system was adopted.⁴⁶ By October of 1955 the last of the "Four Great Systems," the Order of Merit System, had been enacted.

Peng had a keen interest in naval affairs. In 1955, he led the military's first successful combined arms amphibious assault. This amphibious operation was directed against Nationalist troops in the islands off the coast of Zhejiang province.⁴⁷ Peng wanted the PLAN to develop methodically and within Chinese capabilities. In a statement that reflected Chinese capabilities and the influence of the Soviet Young School he said, "The process of building the Navy should be 'First boats, then ships.' First, we should develop torpedo boats, submarines, et cetera."⁴⁸

First Five Year Plan

The period of 1953-1957, officially designated "transition to socialism," corresponded to the PRC's First Five Year Plan. The goal of the First Five Year Plan emphasized the development of heavy

industry.⁴⁹ This emphasis on heavy industry helped the PLAN especially in the development of ship repair and construction facilities. Although at the end of the first Five Year Plan, the leadership was generally satisfied with what had been achieved, Mao and leftist radicals thought more could be accomplished if the population was ideologically aroused and if domestic resources were used to simultaneously develop agriculture and industry.⁵⁰ Mao carried the day and pulled China into the Great Leap Forward which had dire effects on the PLAN's modernization programs. The failure of the Great Leap forward combined with the withdrawal of Soviet assistance led to a two year shipbuilding hiatus.



Figure 6. Military Regions of the PRC, 1949. Reprinted, by permission, Jonathan D. Spence. The Search for Modern China (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990), 523.

Political Struggles

Throughout the early 1950s, the PLA had been organized into six separate military regions (Figure 6). Each of these regions had four main posts: a government chairman, a party secretary, a military commander, and a PLA political commissar. Some men, such as Gao Gang and Rao Shushi, held more than one post and were developing strong regional power bases.⁵¹ In 1954 these two strong regional leaders were purged and the military and administrative organizations were centralized.

The PLAN did not escape this centralization of power in Beijing. In 1955, the PLAN began the formation of a three fleet system. The East China Military Region Navy became the East Sea Fleet with its headquarters in Shanghai (Figure 4). The Navy of the South Central China Military Region was renamed the South Sea Fleet and established its headquarters in Zhangjiang. The naval activities in north China were not organized into a fleet structure at this time.

Previously, the PLAN had avoided the heavy political influence that the ground forces had experienced. It was only in 1957, that the PLAN established the office of First Political Commissar, with Su Zhenhua as its first leader. Prior to 1957, the navy's senior Political Commissar and head of the navy's Political Department was entitled, Deputy Political Commissar. Su Zhenhua held this post at the time of his promotion to First Political Commissar, a move which merely formalized his control of the navy's political structure. The minimal political influence in naval affairs was evident in Su's 1957 address to the Congress of Naval Activists in which standard political rhetoric was

decidedly absent. In this speech he charged the navy to practice economy, raise the quality of the armed forces, develop tactical expertise, continue to strengthen China's defense of territorial waters, escort merchant convoys, and protect the fishing fleet.⁵²

Taiwan Straits Crisis

In 1958, the PRC threatened to complete the task that the Korean War had stopped. The most extensive series of naval actions between the PLAN and ROC occurred during the blockade of the islands of Jinmen and Mazu in 1958. In attempts to intercept resupply convoys to Jinmen, the PLAN lost four torpedo boats. Only U.S. intervention with four carrier task forces prevented Jinmen from falling to the Communists.⁵³ This crisis again showed the ability of sea power to influence events and also prompted the PRC to extend its territorial seas from 3 to 12 nautical miles.

Split with the Soviet Union

The Sino-Soviet rift that emerged in the late 1950s dramatically affected the PLAN. This rift was basically a divergence in paths between the two socialist states coupled with underlying distrust between Mao and the Soviet leader Khrushchev.⁵⁴ First, the split delayed the PLAN's modernization plans. This break also caused the PLAN to reevaluate its strategy. No longer did it have a benevolent Soviet Union to the north.

The ideological and political split between the Soviet Union and the PRC delayed the PLAN's growth. In 1959 Soviet naval assistance was dramatically reduced and by August 1960 the Soviet Union had removed the

last 150 naval advisors (down from a peak of 2,000). The effect on the PLAN was dramatic, virtually all ship construction was halted, half completed ships and submarines sat idle while naval leaders determined priorities. Additionally, the supply of spare parts for the Soviet made equipment stopped, causing more units to remain inport.⁵⁵ This dramatic cut off drove the PLAN to self-sufficiency, a trait that remains ingrained in Chinese military thinking.

This initial period of the PLAN's history ended in 1959. In that year all of the influences previously described were dramatically changed. Strategically, 1959 marked the end of Soviet assistance to the PLAN. Economically, the effects of the failed Great Leap Forward were beginning to be felt. Politically and institutionally, the replacement of Peng Dehuai as Minister of National Defense with Lin Biao had a significant influence on the PLAN.

CHAPTER THREE

LIN BIAO AND THE PLAN (1960-1971)

The new leader of the Chinese military, Lin Biao, was to become a significant factor in the development of the PLAN. This second era of the PLAN's history was a period of growth and modernization that occurred despite national economic disasters and political instability. Most of this expansion can be attributed to one man, Lin Biao. During this period, Lin had a larger influence on naval force structure and strategy than the PLAN's commander. Lin Biao's vehement anti-Americanism led to the expansion of the PLAN as a counter to the U.S. Navy.

The PLAN in 1960 was significantly different from the force created only a decade before. The number, variety, and capability of its ships had increased (Table 5). The ships of the PLAN now had more of a Soviet appearance as a result of Soviet naval assistance in the 1950s. As shown in Table 5, the PLAN now had the nucleus of a coastal defense force with its large numbers of fast attack craft, submarines, and patrol vessels.

The personnel composition of the PLAN had also changed. Although the officer corps was still composed almost entirely of former PLA officers, the PLAN had begun developing its own officer corps. Instead of volunteers, the majority of the PLAN's sailors were now conscripts serving a five year term of service.

Table 5.--PLAN's Composition by Ship TYPE (1960)

| SHIP CLASS | QUANTITY | NOTES |
|-------------------|-------------|--|
| ATTACK SUBMARINE | 26 | ALL EX-SOVIET. THE MOST CAPABLE ARE THE 12 "W" CLASS |
| DESTROYER | 4 | ALL EX-SOVIET GORDY CLASS |
| FRIGATE | 16 | INCLUDES 4 RIGA CLASS BUILT IN SHANGHAI |
| FLEET MINESWEEPER | 10 | ALL SOVIET T-43 CLASS |
| PATROL VESSEL | 27 | EX-SOVIET AND BRITISH CRAFT |
| TORPEDO BOAT | APPROX. 150 | 50 SOVIET P-6 CLASS AND SEVERAL SOVIET P-4 CLASS |
| AMPHIBIOUS SHIPS | 25 | MOSTLY EX-U.S. SHIPS |
| REPAIR SHIP | 1 | EX-USS ACHILLES(ARL-41) |

Source: Raymond V. B. Blackman, ed., Jane's Fighting Ships 1960-1961 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., 1960), 117-121.

As a result of changes in the 1950s, the PLAN was developing along the lines of a professional naval force modeled on the Soviet navy. Not only were the PLAN's ships of Soviet design, so were its strategy, rank structure, and uniforms. In the previous decade the PLAN had adopted the Soviet "Young School" of naval thought that advocated an inshore defense with light surface craft over a high seas fleet with larger ships.¹ This strategy was to continue throughout the decade with some political modifications.

By 1960, the PLAN's organization had evolved to resemble its current structure (Figure 7). The naval activities in northeast China were now consolidated under the North Sea Fleet headquartered in

Qingdao. The PLAN's top leadership, Xiao Jinguang and Su Zhenhua, remained the same. However, Zhang Aiping, the founder of the East China Military Region Navy in 1949 had previously reverted back to the PLA.

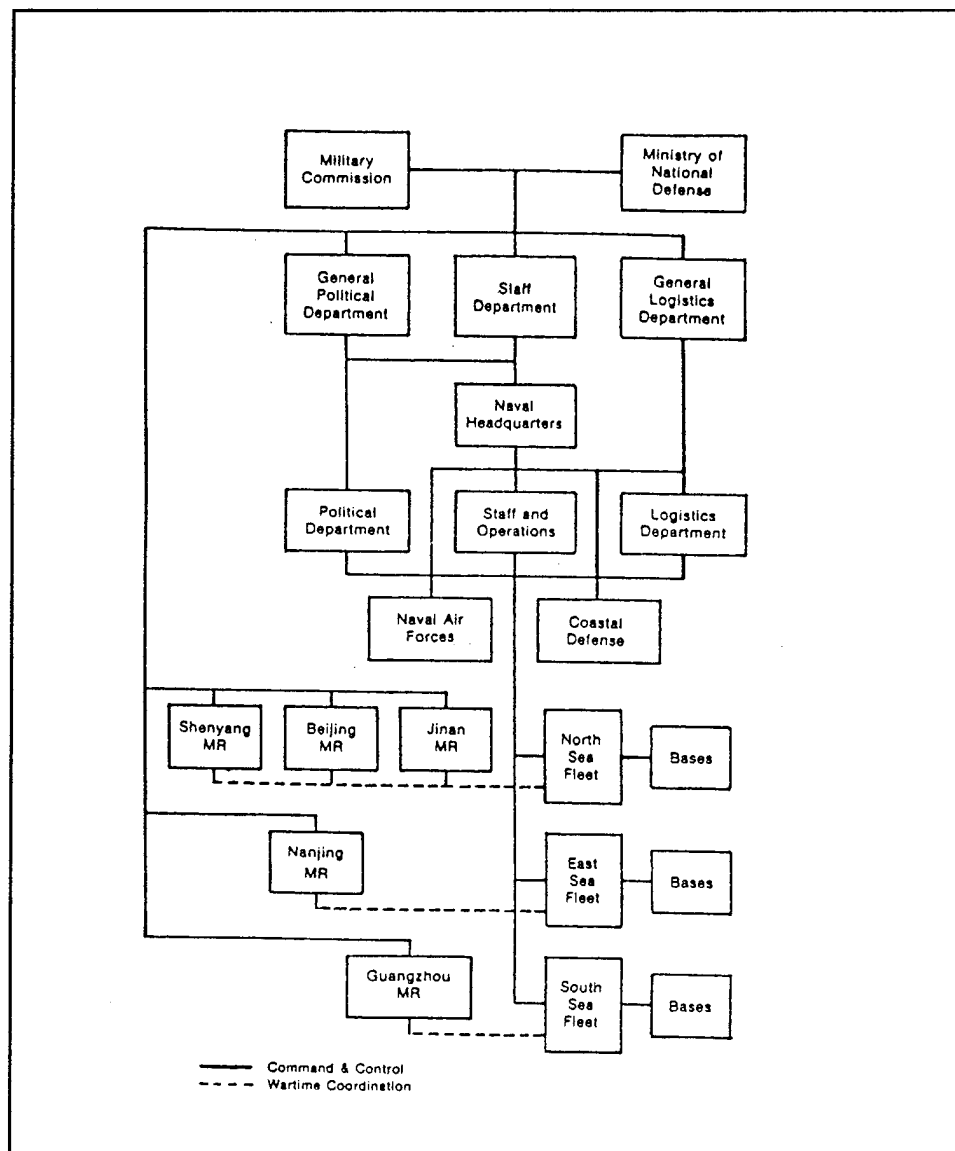


Figure 7. Naval Organization. Reprinted from Godwin The Chinese Communist Armed Forces (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1988), 123.

Strategic Outlook

Throughout the 1960s, the Chinese continued to view the U.S. Navy as the primary maritime threat. The U.S. Navy was seen as part of an effort to encircle China, as depicted in Figure 8.

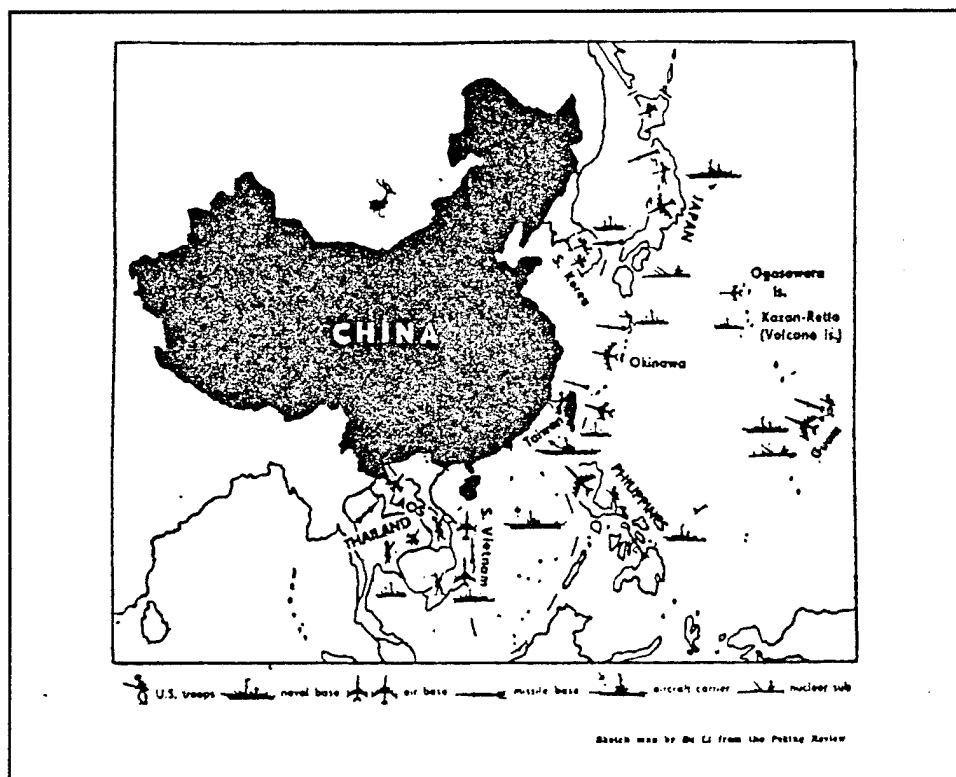


Figure 8. U.S. Encirclement of the PRC. Drawing from Peking Review, reprinted in Washington Post, 27 February 1966, E3.

The PLAN did not view the Soviet navy as a major threat. The political literature of the day had many references about the U.S. Navy, but none about the Soviet Navy. Strategically, the Soviet Pacific Fleet was not much of a threat in the 1960s. It lagged behind the other three Soviet fleets in the number and quality of its ships. Throughout the 1960s, Soviet operations in the Pacific were consistently last among the

four major operating areas (Mediterranean, Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and Pacific Ocean) in terms of annual ship days.² It was not until late in the decade that China began to perceive a Soviet naval threat in the Pacific.

Naval Strategy

The PRC's naval strategy changed very little in the 1960s. The strategy that came to the fore during this period was an offshoot of Mao's "Great Wall at Sea." This strategy came to be known as the "People's War at Sea." The "People's War at Sea" was a combination of Mao's coastal defense strategy and the Soviet "Young School" doctrine.

In the world struggle, Lin Biao saw that North America and Western Europe constituted the "cities of the world" and the rest of the continents made up the "rural areas of the world."³ He saw proletarian uprisings beginning in these "rural" areas. Using this same analogy, the oceans could also be part of the rural area. The "People's War at Sea" was simply an extension of "rural" guerilla war onto the oceans. In fact, to win at sea one must embrace Mao's thought, rely on the masses of people, make use of cover and concealment, and "bring into full play the strategy and tactics of the people's war."⁴

Period of Retrenchment (1960-1961)

The end of Soviet assistance and the failure of the Great Leap Forward had great impacts upon the PLAN's growth. These two factors combined to effectively halt any new ship development or construction for the PLAN until 1962.⁵ Of these two factors, the end of Soviet assistance affected the PLAN to a greater degree. The end of Soviet

assistance affected the PLAN so deeply that the issue of outside technical dependence affects the PLAN to this day.

The withdrawal of Soviet assistance stopped the PLAN's growth by removing Soviet technicians, halting the supply of spare parts, and restricting the availability of fuel. In 1960, four "W" class submarines were in various stages of construction. After the Sino-Soviet split, work ceased on these submarines for over a year.⁶ Additionally, the PLAN had not stockpiled quantities of spare parts for its Soviet designed ships and submarines. By early 1961 and through 1962 many ships and submarines were unable to operate due to lack of replacement parts and technical assistance.⁷ By 1960, the PRC was importing one-half of its oil requirements from the Soviets. After the split these imports were reduced by 40 percent. The resulting oil shortage caused the PLAN to reduce usage by restricting underway training.⁸

Along with the end of Soviet aid, the economic restructuring after the Great Leap Forward caused a reduction in ship construction. To repair a severe agricultural production slump, the Central Committee in 1961 shifted emphasis away from heavy industry and towards agriculture and light industry.⁹ This was reaffirmed in 1962, when Zhou Enlai called for the nation to put its first priority in agriculture, light industry over heavy industry, and the reduction of state investment in the construction of industrial enterprises.¹⁰ This change in emphasis resulted in dramatic reductions of naval related industries. For example, the production of merchant ships dropped from 54,300 metric tons displacement in 1959 to 13,500 metric tons in 1962 (a

75 percent reduction). Finished steel production declined from 11,300 tons in 1960 to 6,000 tons in 1962 (a 47 percent drop).¹¹ This reduction of industrial production combined with the absence of skilled Soviet technicians crippled the PLAN's development plans for two years.

Expansion and Politics (1962-1966)

During this period the PLAN expanded dramatically. Between 1962 and 1966, expenditures on naval construction rose about 600 percent. The naval budget not only increased in absolute terms but also as a percentage of the growing non-strategic military forces budget. In 1958, the PLAN expenditures constituted 25 percent of the non-strategic forces budget; by 1966 this had increased to 29 percent.¹²

During this period the PLAN used the increased budget appropriations to upgrade the force. In 1962, they resumed work on the four "W" class submarines and started work on its successor, the "R" submarine. The PLAN began construction of a ballistic missile capable submarine, the "G" class in mid 1962. They also refitted the "W" class with new sonars while at the same time decommissioned older submarines. The PLAN also took the first steps towards a modern coastal defense navy with the building of the Komar class missile attack boats in 1963 and the Osa class missile attack boats in 1964. These were equipped with Styx missiles which for the first time gave the PLAN a capable anti-surface capability. The PLAN was also developing large numbers of gun equipped coastal patrol boats and torpedo boats. In 1963, work began on the Jiagnan class frigate, the first surface combatant designed and built in China. The first anti submarine type vessel, the Hainan class submarine chaser, was launched in 1964.¹³

In addition to this significant expansion of the number of vessels and aircraft, several personnel issues were addressed in this period. Li Zuopeng, a fellow Fourth Field Army alumni, was appointed Xiao's deputy in 1962. Li was a close associate of Lin Biao having previously served as a corps commander in his army. Manning and training a technically based force like the PLAN became easier in 1965, when the term of service for ship based sailor conscripts was increased from 5 to 6 years.

In 1965, politics reversed the PLA's turn toward the Soviet professional military model that began at the end of the Korean War. On May 24 of that year, all of Peng Dehuai's 1955 reforms were repealed. Two days later, the military uniform was standardized. This eliminated the most visible distinction between the services and between officers and conscripts. The PLAN would in the future wear the same uniform as the army. In June, the Ministry of National Defense prohibited the use of military titles. Henceforth, officers were to be called by their full name or simply "comrade."¹⁴ These measures were intended to reverse the trend towards the Sovietization of the military model and to force a return to equality that the rank structure had eliminated.

Proof of the validity of the "People's War at Sea" doctrine and small naval combatant employment came in August 1965. In a brief battle eleven torpedo boats, four fast attack craft, and one gunboat engaged a Nationalist large subchaser and a small subchaser. The battle resulted in a PLAN victory. Zhou Enlai commended the participating units by saying "This naval battle entailed close combat, night combat, and mass combat. It was a battle in which small craft fought large vessels."¹⁵

Cultural Revolution (1966-1969)

The Cultural Revolution had three main influences on the PLAN. First, it removed some senior naval officers. Second, it forced the navy to continue with a coastal defense strategy. Third, the Cultural Revolution precipitated a struggle among the PLAN's top leadership. Although these influences are significant, they were minimal compared to the changes the Cultural Revolution brought to the PLA.

Many senior naval officers were purged during the Cultural Revolution. Among those purged were the PLAN's Political Commissar, the navy's chief operations officer, the East Sea Fleet commander, two deputy commanders, and two Fleet Political Commissars. Altogether 120 senior naval officers and thousands of lower ranking personnel were purged.¹⁶

The Cultural Revolution forced the PLAN to continue with its coastal defense naval strategy. The political rhetoric espousing men over weapons became doctrine. A skirmish with the Nationalist navy was described as "a sea battle that refuted the bourgeois and revisionist theory that weapons, rules, and regulations and 'experts' are omnipotent."¹⁷ The fear of political reprisal made challenging the current strategy very hazardous.

The Cultural Revolution also precipitated a struggle between the PLAN's commander, Xiao Jinguang, and his deputy, Li Zuopeng. Li had been in his position since 18 June 1962.¹⁸ On 9 June 1967, he replaced Su Zhenhua, as First Political Commissar of the PLAN.¹⁹ As a result of his ties with Lin Biao, Li Zuopeng effectively became the PLAN's chief. Xiao Jinguang became a mere figurehead and was relatively silent

throughout the Cultural Revolution. The proof of Li's power was demonstrated in 1969, when he, rather than Xiao, was appointed to the Politburo.²⁰

Even with the continuing political struggle, both civilian and military shipbuilding increased during this period. Despite the rejection of the Soviet model, the PLAN followed the same ship priorities developed by Peng Dehuai in the 1950s. In 1969, Zhou Enlai restated these ship building priorities:

Submarines, fast attack craft, development of this kind of vessels (sic) is what we should accelerate. We are hopeful that a nuclear powered submarine can enter the water in 1970. . . . The Navy should enhance its airborne and surface defense systems.²¹

Shipbuilding skills had increased by the late 1960s. In 1968, China designed and built its first 10,000 ton class merchant ship.²² The PLAN received the first "R" diesel-electric class submarine built entirely with domestic materials in 1969.²³

Soviet Border Incident (1969)

Relations with Soviets continued to deteriorate during the 1960s. Beginning in 1966 and continuing through 1968, the Chinese grew wary of increased Soviet troop levels along the border. In March 1969, Chinese and Soviet troops clashed in the disputed Wusuli Jiang (Ussuri River) border area.²⁴ After this incident, the Soviet Pacific Fleet began to be perceived as a threat. The Soviets were viewed as "frantically expanding its navy and building up a fleet with combat ability in far oceans"²⁵ that would be used in conjunction with the U.S. to blockade the PRC.

The threat to the PLAN was starting to change in the early 1970s. Instead of one major threat, there were now two. The Chinese argued that in the face of two "maritime tyrants" that they should build a powerful navy and a strong merchant marine. They also suggested that China should build "railroads on the sea" that would facilitate national defense, the liberation of Taiwan, and the providing of support to world revolution.²⁶

The regional navies were not viewed as major threats. However, the rebirth and growth of Japan's naval forces was noted with some concern. The Japanese government and the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) was criticized heavily in 1970 and 1971 just prior to the return of the Ryukyu Islands (including the PRC claimed Senkakus) to Japan by the U.S. Also, the raids from Taiwan had diminished in the 1960s as the PLAN and PLA solidified its coastal defenses in the Taiwan Strait.²⁷

The Fall of Lin Biao (1971)

After an abortive coup, Lin Biao was killed in an airplane crash on 13 September 1971. Afterwards, all of Lin's supporters were removed from office in what has been called the "most extensive purge of the PLA high command since the Chinese Communists came to power."²⁸ Although, the PLAN in general was not associated with the coup attempt, the PLAN's political commissar, Li Zuopeng, was deeply involved. Li was a key associate of Lin Biao and the officer who allegedly allowed Lin's escape plane to take off despite explicit orders to the contrary from Zhou Enlai.²⁹ Li was removed as the PLAN's political commissar and all other posts on 24 September 1971.³⁰

Lin did not live to see the type of navy he helped develop. In December of 1971, the first guided missile destroyer designed and built in the PRC was turned over to the PLAN by Dalian Shipyard.³¹ During Lin's tenure as Minister of Defense the PLAN fared well. Lin was crucial to the construction of 7 Luda class destroyers, 2 guided missile frigates, 7 frigates, 95 Surface to Surface Missile (SSM) equipped patrol craft, 430 patrol craft (gun), and over 430 torpedo equipped patrol craft.³²

CHAPTER FOUR

PLAN IN TRANSITION: 1972 TO 1982

By 1972, the PLAN had become a capable coastal defense force. Its substantial submarine force and large numbers of small fast attack craft, some equipped with surface to surface missiles (SSM), were a potent threat to adversaries (Table 6). The PLANAF had also grown in the previous decade and was now estimated to have 100 IL-28 light bombers and around 350 fighters (mostly MiG-15,17, and 19 types). The PLAN also constructed a series of coastal surveillance sites that provided coverage of the entire coastline out to 50 miles.¹ This was the coastal defense force initiated by Lin Biao.

The CCP's reaction to Lin's coup attempt was to reduce the political role of the military. PLA representation in the 25 man Politburo dropped from a high of 52 percent in 1969 to 28 percent in 1973 and in the same time frame PLA membership in the Central Committee dropped from 45.6 percent to 31.3 percent.² The PLAN lost its first ever Politburo representative, Li Zuopeng, because of his association with Lin Biao and his involvement in Lin's coup attempt.

Lin Biao's death temporarily halted naval expansion. In 1972 military spending dropped 20 percent and rose only 1 percent per year for the rest of the decade. These budget constraints cut and slowed procurement of the Luda destroyer and the Han nuclear submarine construction programs. However, construction of Young School type ships

continued, with production of several "R" class submarines, fast attack craft, and the development of the Ming class submarine.³

Table 6-- PLAN's Composition by Ship TYPE (1972)

| SHIP CLASS | QUANTITY | NOTES |
|-----------------------------|----------|---|
| BALLISTIC MISSILE SUBMARINE | 1 | "G" CLASS |
| ATTACK SUBMARINE | 35 | ALL SOVIET DESIGN |
| DESTROYER | 5 | 4 GORDY DESTROYERS 1 LUDA GUIDED MISSILE DESTROYER |
| FRIGATE | 18 | 5 JIANGNAN CLASS 4 RIGA CLASS |
| MISSILE BOAT | 17 | OSA AND KOMAR CLASS |
| FLEET MINESWEEPER | 20 | SOVIET T-43 CLASS |
| FAST GUNBOATS | 315 | 37MM GUNS |
| PATROL VESSEL | 20 | EX-SOVIET AND BRITISH CRAFT |
| TORPEDO BOAT | 220 | SOVIET P-4 AND P-6 CLASS |
| AMPHIBIOUS SHIPS | 25 | MOSTLY EX-U.S. SHIPS |
| REPAIR SHIP | 1 | EX-USS ACHILLES(ARL-41) |

Sources: Raymond V. B. Blackman ed., Jane's Fighting Ships 1972-1973 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., 1960), 64-68, and David G. Muller, China as a Maritime Power (Boulder Co: Westview Press, 1983), 89-110.

Economic Influences in the Early 1970s

The PLAN benefitted from China's increased interest in maritime economic affairs in the 1970s. The primary economic influence was the

growing importance of offshore oil fields. The second economic factor was expansion of foreign trade and the follow on development of a large merchant fleet, expanded ship building capacity, and growth in maritime infrastructure.

Oil became a major concern for China as well as the rest of the world in the early 1970s. In the early 1970s, surveying efforts determined that large oil deposits were possibly located under the East China and Yellow Seas. In 1974 South Korea and Japan established a joint development zone for finding oil under the East China Sea continental shelf (Figure 9). This was seen in Beijing as a flagrant infringement of China's sovereignty. The official Chinese position as stated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was: "The East China Sea continental shelf is the natural extension of the Chinese continental territory. The People's Republic of China has inviolable sovereignty over the East China Sea continental shelf."⁴

Early in the 1970s the PLAN was involved in protecting China's continental shelf from oil exploration by foreign nations and companies. Previously, two PLAN Komar class missile boats shadowed a Gulf oil company exploration ship that was conducting surveys north of Taiwan approximately 40 to 50 miles from the Chinese mainland. Due to this naval presence, the U.S. pressured the company to withdraw its ship.⁵ Between February and June 1973, PLAN Komar class missile boats appeared intermittently within a mile of Gulf oil drilling rig, Glomar IV, in a Korean concession area of the East China Sea. This presence combined with American reluctance to press the concession claim, forced Gulf Oil to abandon efforts to drill in the area.⁶ These two events again

demonstrated to the Chinese the benefits of even a minimal naval presence.

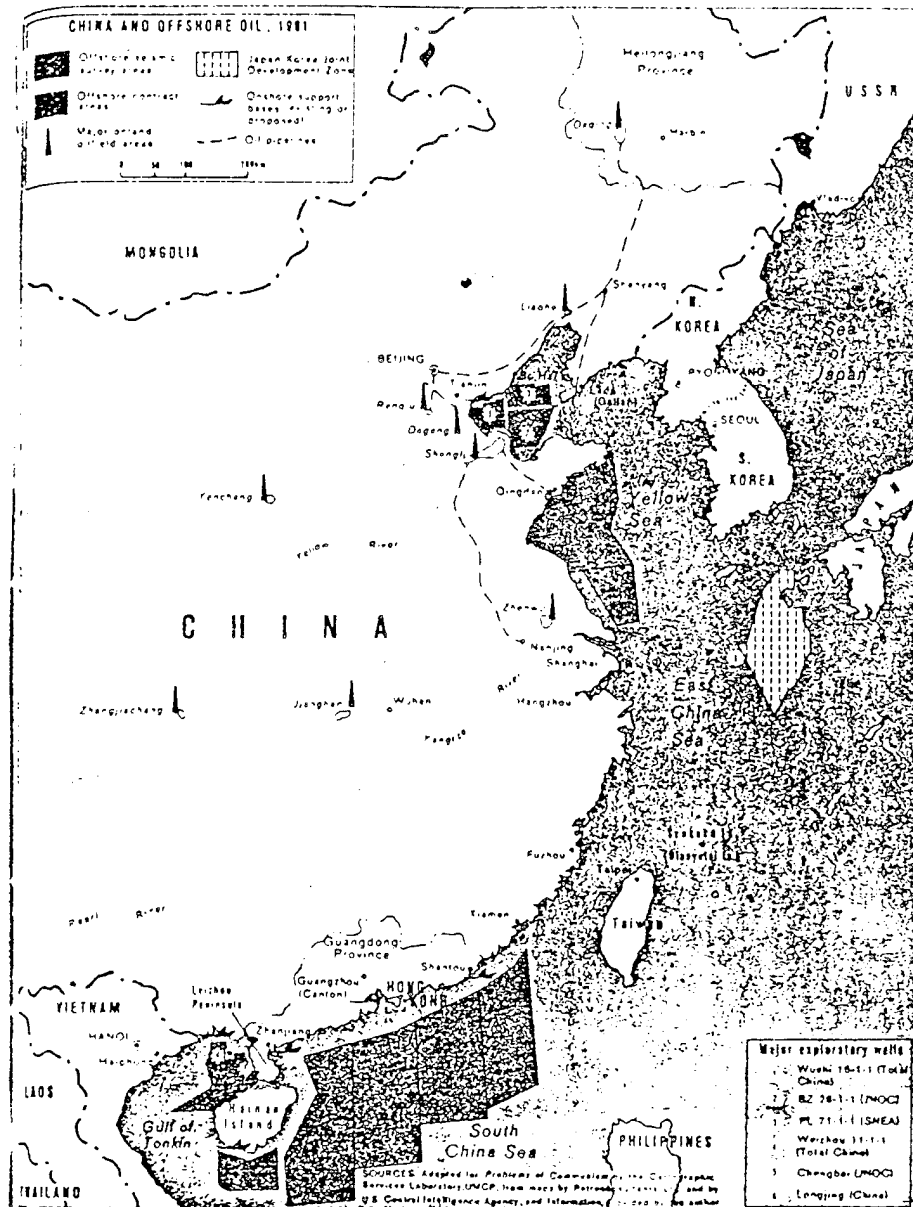


Figure 9. China's Offshore Oil Regions. Reprinted, by permission, from Kim Woodard, "China and Offshore Energy" in Problems of Communism Vol. XXX, Nov-Dec 1981, 39.

In addition protecting China's offshore petroleum resources, the PLAN was used to assist state oil enterprises. This assistance included providing the oil rigs with meteorological data, coordinating the preparation of exploratory work, and safeguarding personnel working on the rigs. The PLANAF also flew sorties to ascertain concentrations of oil resources.⁷ Thus the navy played a key role in the development of China's offshore oil resources.

The growing size of the Chinese merchant marine and shipbuilding industries focused government attention on maritime affairs. To help start an internationally competitive merchant marine, the Chinese began with foreign ship purchases. The PRC purchased 250 freighters, tankers, and bulk carriers totaling 2.5 million gross tons between 1970 and 1976. There was also a dramatic increase in shipbuilding output. Between 1970 and 1976, the PRC constructed 94 freighter, tankers, and bulk carriers amounting to over 1 million gross tons.⁸ Ship production was accelerated. For example, Jiangnan shipyard in Shanghai built 5 ships in 1974, whereas in the 1960s the shipyard took five years to build a single ship.⁹

The PRC also began upgrading its maritime infrastructure. Besides ships, the most important item a maritime nation required was facilities to tranship products efficiently. Such facilities included deep draft berths, wide and deep channels, and modern freight handling equipment. This improvement in maritime infrastructure had the advantage that it could also be used by the PLAN.

Law of the Sea Debate

The PRC's admission into the United Nations in 1971 began a decade long involvement in international maritime discussions revolving around the development of the Law of the Sea Treaty. The PRC's participation in the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) highlighted maritime affairs and the need for a strong navy to protect China's offshore resources.

The UNCLOS meetings were important to the Chinese. The conferences provided a forum to denounce the two superpowers as "maritime hegemonists", and to curry political favor among Third World coastal states who wanted a 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). For the Chinese the issue was both economic and strategic. The Chinese press accused the U.S. and the Soviet Union of plundering the resources of smaller countries, using territorial waters to collect military information, and as a base to launch invasions.¹⁰

After nine years the Law of the Sea Treaty was signed on 10 December 1982. Although not pleased with the provisions on deep sea mining and transit of foreign warships through territorial waters, the Chinese signed the treaty. The vice chairman of the Chinese delegation to the UNCLOS said after the signing, that countries should make efforts to defend the principles of the convention and their legal rights and interests.¹¹ This debate over the Law of the Sea highlighted the need for a comprehensive maritime strategy that would protect Chinese rights and interests in the waters of East Asia.

Paracel Islands

During the same period that the Law of the Sea was being debated, the Chinese quest to recapture "lost territories" manifested itself in the South China Sea. A dispute began over the Spratly Islands (Figure 10) in late 1973, as a result of South Vietnam's leasing of oil concessions and incorporation of a portion of the Spratly (Nansha) Islands into their Phuoc Tuy province.¹²

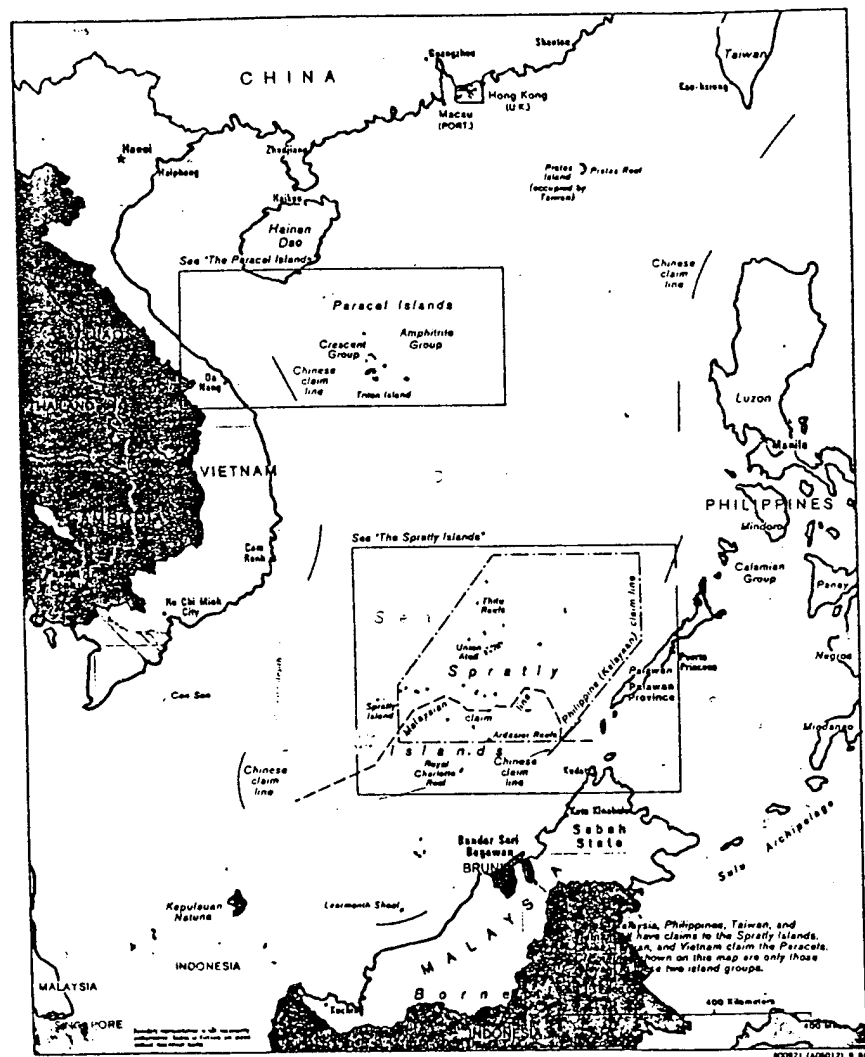


Figure 10. South China Sea Islands

Although the dispute between China and South Vietnam revolved around the Spratly Islands, conflict between the two militaries began in the Paracel (Xisha) Islands. Prior to the conflict both sides had forces in the Paracels. The PRC occupied the northeast portion of the islands known as the Amphitrite Group, and the South Vietnamese occupied the Crescent Group in the southwest (Figure 10). On 19-20 January 1974, the PLAN captured the Crescent Group of the Paracel Islands with a task force of fast attack craft and about 500 troops.

The action in the Paracels was the PLAN's first amphibious operation since 1955. Although it appeared to be a modern combined arms amphibious assault, there was little coordination between the PLA branches. International condemnation along with an inability to project power further south prevented the PLAN from securing the Spratly Islands.¹³

Soviet Hegemonism Replaces U.S. Imperialism

Another important strategic factor affecting the PLAN in this period was the shift in China's primary threat from the United States to the Soviet Union. In this period Sino-American relations improved, while the Sino-Soviet dispute expanded to the oceans. The Soviet Pacific Fleet became the primary adversary of the PLAN because of its expansion, the pattern of operations in Asia, and the hostile political relations between China and the U.S.S.R. Second, the Soviet activities in Asia were seen as an attempt to encircle the PRC. Having a new adversary to replace the U.S. meant that the PLAN could continue to request increased expenditures on naval forces.

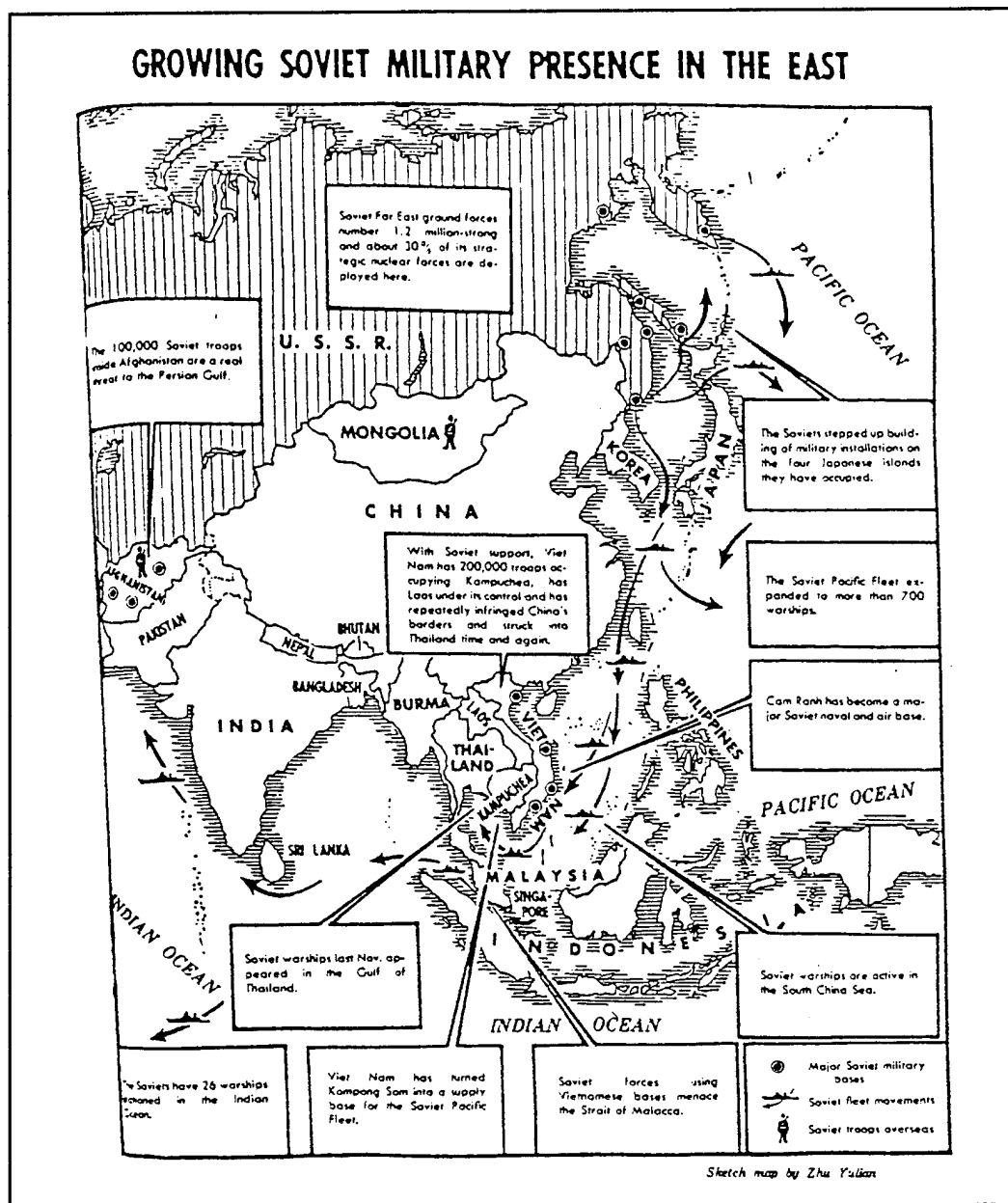


Figure 11. Soviet Encirclement of the PRC. Reprinted, by permission, Beijing Review, March 23, 1981, 21.

Soviet naval expansion in the Pacific was watched closely by the PRC. By the early 1980s, the Soviet Pacific Fleet had almost doubled the number of principal surface combatants to 90, increased its naval aviation by 50 percent to 440 aircraft, and added many newer

classes of nuclear powered submarines. In addition, the Soviet navy had stationed its largest contingent of naval infantry (8,000 men) in Vladivostock.¹⁴ The world wide Soviet naval exercise, "Okean 75," demonstrated the Soviet threat to the Chinese. The Chinese also had noted the increased Soviet naval activity near the PRC's coastline.

At this time the Chinese came to view the Soviets as "hegemonists" who wanted to dominate Asia (Figure 11) and encircle the PRC. The Soviets use of Vietnamese port facilities beginning in 1979 was major proof of this intention. The Chinese saw the goals of this Soviet expansion as fourfold: the removal of the U.S. from the Western Pacific, the encirclement and isolation of China, the neutralization of Japan, and the gradual control of Southeast Asian countries.¹⁵

Return of Professionalism and Modernization

By the mid-1970s, professionalism and modernization had begun its return to the military. In May 1974 the PLAN reinstituted a uniform that was similar to the ones of the professional era of the late 1950s. The PLAN's first nuclear power submarine, Han, was launched in 1974. Also in 1974, Jianghu, the lead ship of a new class of frigates was laid down. In January 1975, Zhou Enlai formally announced the PRC's decision to begin the "comprehensive modernization of national defense."¹⁶ Military school curriculum once again concentrated on military vice political studies.

The Decline of the Political Influence from the Left

A major political factor affecting the PLAN was the reduction of the political influence of the leftists. Symbolic of the political

decline of the leftists was the fall of the "Gang of Four." This group, which included Mao's wife, opposed naval professionalism and had in 1975 sidetracked a PLAN modernization proposal that envisioned an ocean going navy as well as a strong coastal defense.¹⁷ A member of this group, Zhang Chunqiao, stated that a navy was irrelevant in the age of shore-based guided missiles.¹⁸ After the fall of the "Gang of Four," the naval modernizers responded with:

The introduction of guided missiles cannot replace a navy or diminish its role. The navy has a multi-faceted role to play: to destroy enemy naval power, to blockade vital sea areas, to protect sea communications and transport, to coordinate with the army in naval actions, and to protect fishing and shipping in peacetime.¹⁹

This rebuttal defines many of the missions of a modern navy, such as sea control, sea denial, and power projection. It appears that the PLAN was already focusing on new roles and missions at this stage in 1977. Once the "Gang of Four" was removed from power the PLAN began to distance itself from old strategy and doctrine.

Development of a New Naval Doctrine

After Mao's death, the PRC leadership sought out a new military doctrine that would encompass the new strategic and technological realities. To avoid repudiating Maoist doctrine, this new military doctrine was linked to the past and was labeled "People's War Under Modern Conditions."²⁰ The military strategy that accompanied this new doctrine was again a modification of Mao's ideas. Later labeled "Active Defense Under New Historical Conditions," this strategy placed more emphasis on forward defense and modernization. The new military doctrine and strategy were the essential ingredients for the development

of a new naval strategy. This naval strategy was finalized in the 1980s and will be addressed in the next chapter.

The shift away from a "Young School" coastal defense strategy was evidenced by the construction in 1977 of an underway replenishment ship. This type of ship, the Fuqing class, was the first underway replenishment ship in the PLAN. The first one became operational in 1979 and the PLAN currently has two of these ships.²¹ The capability to refuel at sea gave the PLAN added range, flexibility, and the ability to remain on station longer.

During the late 1970s the PLAN began to concentrate on combined arms naval warfare. At the Third Plenum of the 11th CCP Central Committee (18 to 22 December 1978), Deng Xiaoping directed the military to "Pay special attention to combined combat training."²² This combined combat training meant that surface, subsurface, and air elements of the navy were to coordinate their activities to mass combat power on the enemy. It was during this period that the PLAN developed the Regulations on the Coordinated Training of Ships and Aircraft which instituted better planning and a broadening of coordinated ship-aircraft training.²³

To accommodate these changes to doctrine and strategy, the PLAN upgraded its training program. The training concentrated on improving the standards of the "Five Combat Capabilities." These combat capabilities were:

1. Coordinated combat capability
2. Quick reaction capability
3. Electromagnetic Counter Measure (ECM) capability

4. Guaranteed logistical capability
5. Field survival capability²⁴

These combat capabilities provide an insight into the PLAN's emphasis for development. They wanted to develop a capability to conduct coordinated surface, air, and subsurface attacks on the enemy. The PLAN was to be flexible and agile in order to quickly respond to any threat and would use ECM to negate the electronic advantage of a more advanced navy. Additionally, the PLAN would ensure sufficient logistic support and upgrade their ships' damage control capabilities.

Economic Influences (1976-1982)

Along with the decline of leftist political extremism came an economic program known as the "Four Modernizations." This program called for modernization of industry, agriculture, science/technology, and national defense in that order of priority. The PRC leadership believed that a strong economy was a basis for a strong national defense. The PRC's press echoed this theme by stating: "Only with the faster growth of economic construction can there be greater progress in defence{sic} construction."²⁵ In a 1981 address to the PLA, Deng Xiaoping called for the military to build a powerful armed force, to improve the army's weaponry, and to accelerate the modernization of national defense on the basis of a continually expanding economy.²⁶ Thus, economic modernization can be seen as a precursor of military modernization.

With increased foreign trade came the growth of a large merchant marine fleet and ship building capability. Between 1970 and 1980, the PRC's merchant fleet expanded from 70 ships with a total

displacement (empty) of 750,000 tons to 431 ships with a total displacement (empty) of 7,920,000 tons.²⁷ This expansion was accomplished by purchasing ships abroad and through national ship construction. By the end of the 1970s, the PRC was building merchant ships for export.

Testing the New Modernizations

Towards the end of the 1970s the PLAN began a series of out of area operations to test new ships, technologies, and techniques. In 1977, a PLAN submarine conducted a first ever training cruise in the Western Pacific.²⁸ The PLAN exercised naval combined arms in 1979, when 4 submarines, 22 surface ships, 4 reconnaissance and 8 fighter aircraft combined to intercept a simulated enemy task force in the Yellow Sea and East China Sea.²⁹

The most distant of these out of area operations occurred in May of 1980. In this operation, an eighteen ship PLAN task force deployed 4,000 miles to the South Pacific in support of a Dong Feng V intercontinental ballistic missile test conducted on 18 May (Figure 12). In this task force were the two recently completed Fuqing class underway replenishment ships which were vital in supporting the 35 day operation. This force demonstrated the PLAN's ability to sustain a naval force in distant waters.³⁰

The PLAN continued with these experiments and trials. In a test of long range maritime surveillance, two PLANAF B-6 bombers conducted the first patrol of the Spratly Islands on 8 November 1980.³¹ In the spring of 1981, a PLAN naval force conducted a naval presence operation in which they operated off southern Japan, in the Philippine

Sea, the South China Sea, and Gulf of Tonkin.³² In October 1982, the PLAN conducted its first successful submerged launch of a ballistic missile.³³ Even with these improvements in various tactics, techniques, and procedures, the PLAN still lacked a leader who could envision the navy as more than just an adjunct of the army.

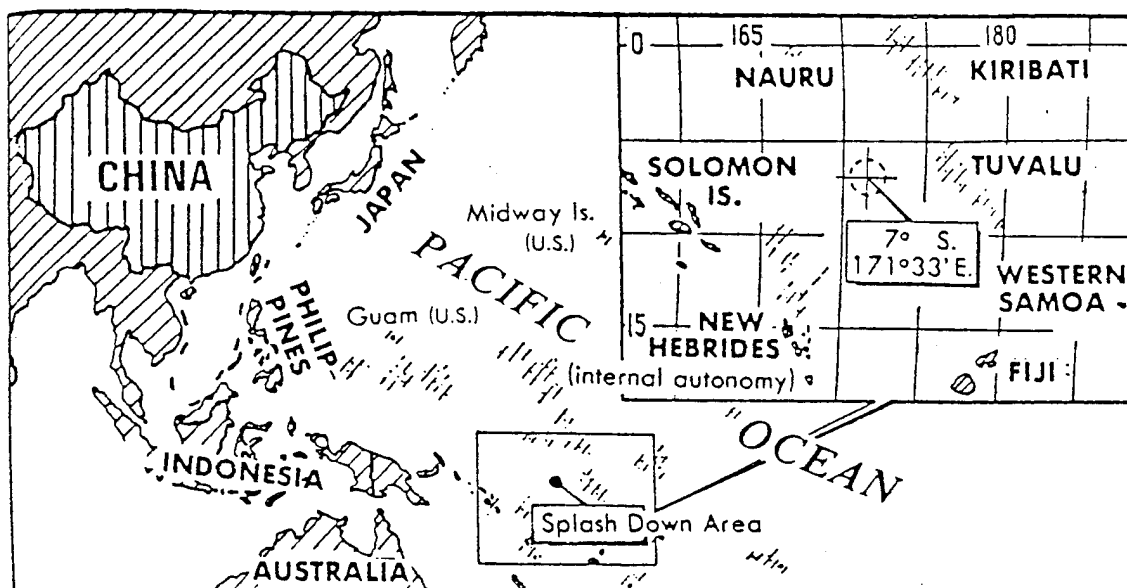


Figure 12. PLAN's South Pacific Deployment. Reprinted, by permission, from Beijing Review, 23, No. 21, 26 May 1980, 5.

New PLAN Leadership

As the modernization progressed in the late 1970s, it became clear that the PLAN's older leadership would have to be replaced. Xiao Jinguang, who had headed the navy since 1950, was incapable of changing the organization and bureaucracy that he had instituted. In 1978, he was promoted and the PLAN was effectively under the control of Xiao's deputy and an experienced naval officer, Liu Daosheng.³⁴ The command

situation was clarified two years later when on 11 January 1980, Ye Fei was appointed Commander of the PLAN bypassing Liu Daosheng.³⁵

Ye Fei was another relatively old army officer with limited naval experience. He was born in Fujian province in 1914. Like most officers, Ye Fei was not educated outside China. He was a member of the Fourth Field Army during the last part of the Civil War. He had served tours as commander of the Fujian Military District and commander of the Fuzhou Military Region. Only in the year prior to his appointment did Ye Fei have any connection with the PLAN (he was made 1st Political Commissar in 1979).³⁶

Ye Fei proved unsuitable for the assignment, due primarily to poor health. He reportedly had two heart attacks in his first year of office. In December of 1980, Liu Daosheng headed a delegation to Pakistan where he was identified as "Acting Commander" of the navy.³⁷ Even after he recovered, Ye was unable to provide strong direction to the PLAN in these critical years of development.

On 28 August 1982, the Central Military Commission (CMC) retired Ye Fei. Again Liu Daosheng was bypassed, this time in favor of Liu Huaqing.³⁸ Liu was the first officer with significant naval experience to head the PLAN. The nomination of a career naval officer to the PLAN's top leadership position was a significant turning point in its history.

Liu was born in Hubei province in 1916. During the latter part of the Chinese revolution he was deputy political commissar of the 10th Army of the Second Field Army, where he became friends with Deng Xiaoping. After the founding of the PRC, Liu transferred to the navy.

Liu Huaqing's initial assignment in the forming PLAN was as deputy political commissar of the Number 1 Navy College in Dalian.

From 1954 to 1958 Liu studied at the Soviet Union's Voroshilov Naval War College and the Frunze Naval Academy in Leningrad.³⁹ During Liu's studies, the Soviet Navy was struggling to justify its existence in the face of criticism from the dominant Soviet ground forces. Liu was also in the Soviet Union when the Soviet's leading proponent of a blue water force, Admiral Gorshkov, assumed the command of the Soviet Navy. This was an exciting period in the development of Soviet naval strategy. It is possible that Liu Huaqing was influenced by these naval policy struggles and Soviet blue water expansion plans.

Upon his return in 1958, Liu was assigned as the assistant commander of the North Sea Fleet and commander of the Lushun naval base. Liu moved steadily upward through various assignments. He spent several years involved with research and development.⁴⁰ It would be Liu Huaqing who would lead the PLAN through its next developmental phase.

CHAPTER FIVE

A MODERN NAVY: THE PLAN 1983-1995

By 1983 the PLAN was a first class coastal defense navy that was just beginning to operate further from shore. This navy was the apex of a "Young School" type force, with large numbers of submarines and fast attack craft (Table 7). The navy was increasing its technical capabilities and was beginning to develop a naval strategy and doctrine that were not tied directly to the ground forces. The PLAN's surface combatant forces were well equipped with surface to surface missiles, but lacked surface to air missiles for self or area defense. Due to their large numbers, the coastal fast attack craft provided a formidable coastal defense force. Construction of new ships had added to the PLAN's amphibious lift capability and the recent expansion of the PLAN marine corps had completed the requirements necessary for a limited amphibious assault. Fleet logistics continued to be backward, although the PLAN now had the two Fuqing class replenishment ships.

In 1983, the PLANAF consisted of some 200 bomber and anti-ship strike aircraft, 550 fighter aircraft (mostly MiG-19 Farmers), and about a dozen French made Super Frelon helicopters. The Super Frelon is primarily a shore based helicopter. The PLANAF's ASW capability was significantly limited for it was entirely shore based.¹ It would not be until the early 1990s that the PLAN began deploying helicopters on surface combatant ships.

Table 7.--PLAN's Composition by Ship Type (1983)

| SHIP CLASS | QUANTITY | NOTES |
|-----------------------------|----------|---|
| BALLISTIC MISSILE SUBMARINE | 2 | 1 XIA CLASS 1 "G" CLASS |
| ATTACK SUBMARINE | 109 | 6 HAN CLASS SSN 2 MING CLASS 85 "R" CLASS 16 "W" CLASS |
| DESTROYER | 18 | 4 GORDY CLASS 14 LUDA CLASS DDG |
| FRIGATE | 40 | 14 JIANGHU CLASS 3 JIANGDONG CLASS 5 JIANGNAN CLASS 4 RIGA CLASS |
| MISSILE BOAT | 215 | MOSTLY OSA AND KOMAR VARIANTS |
| FLEET MINESWEEPER | 23 | SOVIET T-43 CLASS |
| FAST GUNBOATS | 402 | MOSTLY SHANGHAI CLASS |
| PATROL VESSEL | 20 | EX-SOVIET AND BRITISH CRAFT |
| TORPEDO BOAT | 260 | MOSTLY HUCHUAN CLASS |
| AMPHIBIOUS SHIPS | 37 | 5 YUKAN CLASS LST 2 YULING CLASS LSM |
| REPLENISHMENT SHIPS | 3 | 3 FUQING CLASS AOR |
| REPAIR SHIP | 1 | EX-USS ACHILLES(ARL-41) |

Source: John Moore ed., Jane's Fighting Ships 1983-1994 (New York: Jane's Publishing Company Ltd., 1983), 91-107.

As the PLAN had grown, so had the Soviet Pacific Fleet. By 1983, the Soviet Pacific Fleet had become a major threat to the PLAN. This fleet consisted of 110 submarines (including 28 nuclear powered

ballistic missile submarines), 1 aircraft carrier, 88 principal surface combatants, 225 minor combatants, 20 amphibious ships (and the bulk of Soviet marines), and 330 combat aircraft.² Although smaller in sheer numbers than the PLAN, the Soviet Pacific Fleet enjoyed an advantage in combat power and capabilities.

By the early 1980s the Chinese military doctrine was evolving into the "People's War Under Modern Conditions" and the military strategy was shifting towards "Active Defense Under New Historical Conditions." Both the doctrine and strategy were predicated on China remaining on the strategic defense. To support the national strategy and doctrine, the PLAN's overall defensive strategy now included an active war of attrition at sea. This strategy rested on three principles. First, the PLAN was to avoid early decisive engagement with the Soviet Pacific Fleet and conserve strength for a protracted war. Second, the PLAN would divide into small groups of highly maneuverable fast attack craft to destroy the Soviets piecemeal. Third, the PLAN would rely on coastal minelaying, land based missiles and artillery, and the PLANAF to interdict Soviet sea lines of communications and prevent a Soviet amphibious assault.³

Economic Influences

Throughout the period 1983 - 1994 the "Four Modernizations" economic reform program continued to influence the PLAN. Military modernization was subordinated to economic modernization. The PLAN leadership concurred with placing economics first. The PLAN's deputy commander, Zhang Xusan, stated in 1992 that, "Economic development

serves as the country's primary task, and the navy will spare no effort in supporting and participating in the process."⁴

These economic reforms brought advanced technology to the PLAN. As one of the more technically oriented branches of the military, the PLAN greatly benefited from China's efforts to modernize her science and technology. In the previous decade the PLAN and the shipbuilding industry had learned how to build ships. Now they faced a more difficult challenge of building the advanced weapons systems, the command and control systems, and the infrastructure which are required of a modern naval power.

First the PLAN had to establish the organization that would determine technological requirements, procure them, test them, and then incorporate the new technology in the fleet. The testing portion came first, with the establishment of the Naval Testing & Evaluation Center on 9 March 1983. Later that year, the navy established three new committees, the Military Studies Research Committee, the Science and Technology Committee, and the Scientific Cultural Education Research Committee.⁵ Together these new committee coordinated the other functions of technological development in the PLAN.

New technology provided the PLAN with advanced systems. Initial emphasis was on purchasing advanced technology from the West. However, the fear of dependence on outside powers learned as a result of the Soviet pull out in the late 1950s forced the PLAN to be selective on which technologies to purchase. As a result, the massive Chinese purchases of Western technology expected by the West never materialized. The PLAN only bought selected military items, usually in small numbers.

This emphasis on research and development directly affected PLAN performance. The reliability of shipboard equipment was improved. During the Seventh Five Year Plan, the navy developed "1,500 kinds of scientific and technological achievements in its reliability research."⁶ Through the use of science and technology, the time and cost of repairing a destroyer dropped 30 percent. The PLAN also developed a fast attack craft main engine that lasted twice as long. In 1983, a small portion of these scientific and technological achievements were estimated to save the PLAN 150 million yuan (approximately 18 million U.S. dollars).⁷

Coastal Development Strategy

Coastal economic development was part of economic modernization and also had an overall positive effect on the PLAN. The economic needs of the coastal Special Economic Zones (SEZs) led to increased development of China's maritime infrastructure. The sixth Five Year Plan (1981-1985) included plans to build 132 deep water berths for 15 coastal ports that would increase cargo handling capacity by 46 percent to 317 million tons by 1985.⁸

Coastal development also had adverse side effects on the PLAN. First, economic development sometimes forced PLAN units to relocate. An example of this occurred in Lianyungang, Jiangsu Province, where larger berths were required to increase local coal exports.⁹ This also occurred in Qinghuangdao, Jiujiang, Xiamen, Guangzhou, Zhoushan, and Tanggu.

Secondly, the use of PLAN units to support coastal economic development hurt navy training. The PLAN was used to rehabilitate older

ships for coastal transport, assist in the construction of facilities, conduct navigational surveys of the coast, repair merchant vessels, and help in anti-smuggling efforts.¹⁰ These activities detracted from training a professional naval force.

A third problem arose out of the PLAN being collocated with the booming SEZs and living in these areas of growing affluence. The relative prosperity of the coastal people compared to the PLAN's austerity caused many navy personnel to concentrate on their own material wealth vice their assignment. The sailors saw an ever-widening gap between the military and local people and morale suffered. As a Beijing radio commentator noted in 1988, "Some cadres and fighters are eager to take off their uniforms and want to be transferred to do civilian work in various localities so as to carve out a new career as soon as possible."¹¹ The PLAN sought to counter these economic influences through education of the strategic importance of their mission.¹²

Ocean Resources

The quest to exploit ocean resources continued to influence the PLAN's strategy. The navy's deputy commander in chief, General Zhang Xusan, stated that the PRC ought to increase its efforts at exploiting marine resources to employ more labor and facilitate the country's growth in the next century.¹³ In 1983, an East China Sea exploratory well yielded the first commercially significant amounts of oil.¹⁴ Protection of these maritime resources, such as oil, was one of the reasons the CMC cited in a 1986 call for a modern navy.¹⁵

Conscripts

The growing Chinese economy made it more difficult for the military to attract personnel. Although the PRC had a conscript system, registration had been voluntary. This voluntary system had sufficed to this point because the military offered Chinese youth an opportunity for upward mobility. The military was especially appealing to rural youth, who made up the majority of the military. For them, the PLA provided an opportunity to learn a skill, so that upon completion of obligated service they could live in the cities. Previously, there had always been more registrants than open billets and the local selection committees could weed out the undesirable. Slowly but surely, improving economic conditions were changing this situation.

The agricultural reforms of the "Four Modernizations" made military service less attractive. More young people were simply not registering for conscription. The Chinese press began a media campaign in the mid-1980s to encourage these people to register. Also, the Chinese government enacted the Conscript Work Regulations on 24 October 1985. This act authorized local governments to force people to fulfill their military obligations according to law.¹⁶ In one example, the Beijing Municipal People's Congress required mandatory registration, and instituted a system of fines and punishment for those who did not. The pull of the free market economy was so great, that one of the possible fines was loss of all business licenses for one year.¹⁷

The second economic influence was the problem of operating increasing technology with relatively backward conscripts. The PLAN adopted three approaches to solve this problem. First, specialists and

engineers would train the crews. Second, outstanding personnel were sent to research institutes and manufacturing plants to study. Third, key technicians were sent abroad for advanced training.¹⁸

Merchant Marine

The rapid growth of the Chinese merchant fleet was important to the PLAN. The merchant fleet allowed ex-PLAN sailors to keep their skills current and reduced unemployment among ex-servicemen. In 1992, nearly 50 percent of the merchant fleet crew members were ex-PLAN sailors. This merchant fleet could become a part of the PLAN in the event of emergency.¹⁹

Merchant ship construction was important to the PLAN as it sustained naval shipyards, improved ship building techniques through practice, and provided hard currency as a result of merchant ship sales abroad. In this period, sales of Chinese built merchant ships expanded. According to one survey, "the fleet has reaped more than 50 million yuan of profits {sic}, and this has made up for the insufficiency of the military expenses to a certain degree."²⁰ It is unclear from the above statement whether foreign ship sale receipts go directly to the PLAN or to the PRC's treasury. Regardless, shipbuilding has been a positive influence for the PLAN and the country as a whole.

New Military and Naval Strategy

The previously described post-Mao evolution in military strategy and doctrine had, by the mid-1980s, resulted in an almost complete reversal of Mao's "People's War" doctrine. According to Zhang Zhen, then commandant of the National Defense University, the Central

Military Commission (CMC) of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party directed a bold course change in the spring of 1985. The CMC believed that the two superpowers had achieved parity and that a major war was unlikely for the remainder of the twentieth century. Accordingly, the CMC directed the PLA to shift their strategy and training to what they felt was the most likely form of conflict in the near future, local limited war (jubuzhangzheng) on the PRC's borders.²¹

This change in military doctrine and strategy coincided with and influenced the development of a new naval strategy. The naval strategy's name remained the same, "Offshore Active Defense." However, this strategy was quite different from the previous one. The primary changes were in the definition of offshore and in the application of new military doctrine and strategy to naval warfare. Although the PRC or the PLAN had not precisely defined the term "offshore", several officials have given their interpretation. Liu Huaqing is reported to have said that the PLAN must maintain effective sea control within the first island chain and that the term offshore relates to the high seas and means the waters within the second island chain (Figure 13).²² In April 1987, Liu Huaqing confirmed that active offshore defense remained the fundamental strategy of Chinese naval forces.²³

The PLAN acquired an enhanced role in the new military doctrine and strategy. Active defense under new historical conditions called for a defense of key areas such as the prospering coastal regions. To do this, the strategy intended to extend China's strategic depth seaward which would transform the coast from a defensive front line to a

strategic rear area. Also, the shift in focus to local wars meant that naval warfare would become a more important area in China's military strategy.

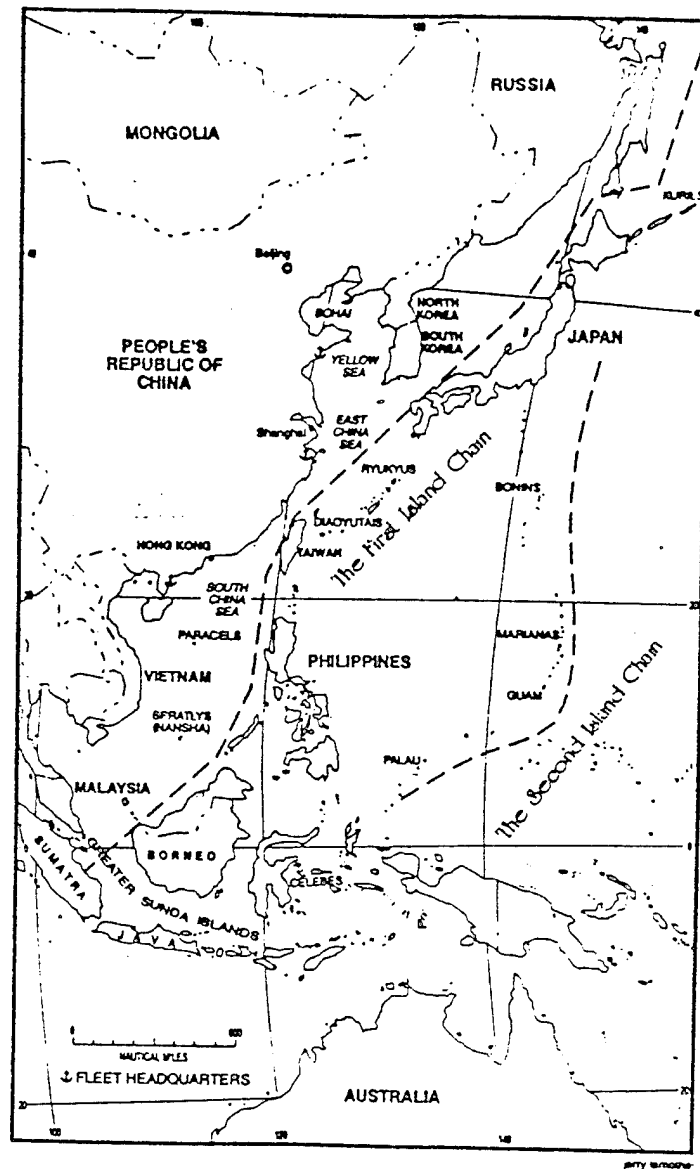


Figure 13. The PLAN's Offshore Defense. Reprinted, by permission from Alexander Chieh-cheng Huang, "The Chinese Navy's Offshore Active Defense Strategy," Naval War College Review, Vol XLVII, No.3 (Summer 1994): 21.

Force Restructuring

In line with the new doctrine and strategy and the primacy of economic growth, China reduced its military manpower. In 1985, Deng Xiaoping formulated a plan to shrink the PLA by 1 million men in two years.²⁴ On 1 August 1985, the CCP's journal stated "the strength of an army is not determined by the number of troops, but by the quality of its commanders and fighters, the quality of its arms, and the degree of rationality of its systems and foundations."²⁵ The PLAN did not escape this reduction in force. Between 1983 and 1993, the PLAN's manning level was reduced from 360,000 to 260,000.²⁶ This 28 percent decrease was roughly the same as the reduction in the ground forces. In addition the military's share of the national budget fell from 13.7 percent in 1983 to 9.4 percent in 1986.²⁷ Following the completion of these reduction in 1986, the military planned to focus on weapons improvements and officer training.²⁸ This was a bold reversal from Mao's doctrine of a "People's War" and again the emphasis was on professionalism vice political correctness.

Zhang Lianzhong

In August 1987, Liu Huaqing was promoted to Vice Chairman of the CMC and Zhang Lianzhong replaced him as commander of the PLAN. Like Liu, Zhang was also an experienced naval officer. He was relatively young, having been born in 1931 in the Liaodong Peninsula. During the Civil War, he was member of the Third Field Army and hence is believed to owe some allegiance to Zhang Aiping, the founder of the PLAN.²⁹ He remained an infantry officer until the mid 1960s when he transferred to

the PLAN. A submariner, he held various submarine and shore commands prior to his assignment as deputy navy commander in 1985. The choice of Zhang surprised many Western military analysts who expected other more notable PLAN leaders to get the assignment.³⁰ He lacked the political influence of Liu Huaqing as he is only an alternate member of the Central Committee.

Political Influences

The biggest political influence on the PLAN during this period was the continued rise in power of Liu Huaqing. In 1985, he became a member of the CCP's Central Committee. While the PLAN's political influence in the person of Liu Huaqing was growing, the political representation of the military as a whole was declining. In 1985, only 13 percent of the CCP's Central Committee were military (as opposed to 45 percent in 1969 at the height of the Cultural Revolution). The downward trend of military representation in the Politburo continued. In 1986, the military made up only 13.6 percent of the Politburo. Additionally, the military was no longer a significant force in local civilian politics.³¹

Spratly Islands (1988)

The Spratly Islands dispute heated up again in 1988 between the two most active participants in the struggle: the PRC and Vietnam. In January of 1988, the PLAN landed troops on two of the islets and then occupied four additional ones. In March, the PLAN and the Vietnamese Navy clashed over the islands. This battle resulted in damage to at least two Vietnamese boats and the PRC maintained control of the islands

they had occupied. This activity in the Spratly Islands has forced the PLAN to maintain patrols of these regions.

Professional Trends

By 1989, the PLAN had become a professional, skilled force capable of conducting extended out of area operations. To test its sustainability and readiness in distant waters, the PLAN conducted numerous port visits and conducted routine exercises away from the PRC. As shown in Figure 14, the PLAN had operated as far away as Hawaii and Karachi, Pakistan. The events of Tiananmen Square temporarily brought these port visits to an end.

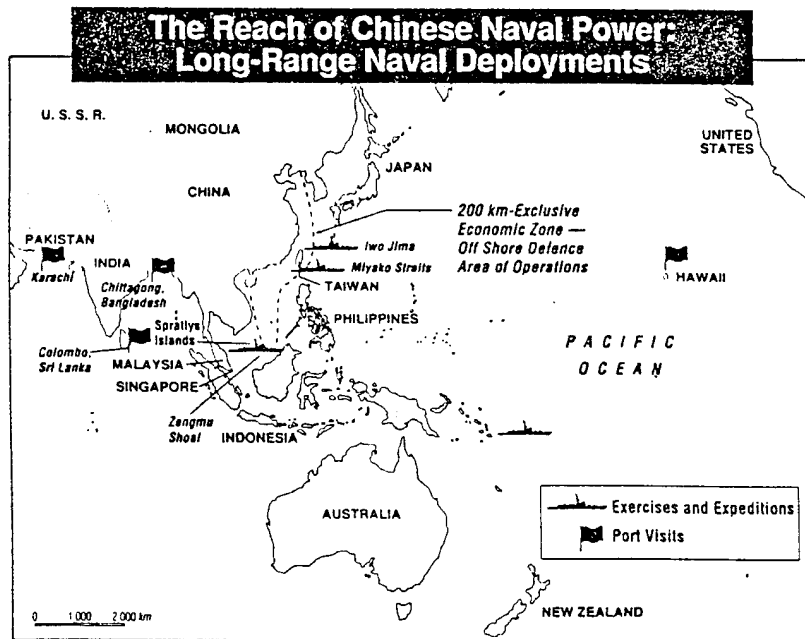


Figure 14. The PLAN's Long Range Deployments. Reprinted, by permission Tai Ming Cheung, Growth of Chinese Naval Power: Priorities, Goals, Missions, and Regional Implications Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990, 13.

Post Soviet Union

The fall of the Soviet Union meant that the land threat from the north was diminished. This caused a reevaluation of defense priorities away from a land bias. This was signified by the greater interest in coastal defense, "land and coastal defenses are of equal importance. There is no problem of which should be given greater emphasis than the other. . . . There is no reason for us to again follow the past guideline of laying one-sided emphasis on border defense construction."³² This new emphasis on coastal defense benefitted the PLAN.

The PLAN also benefitted from the fall of the Soviet Union through the purchase of Soviet arms to upgrade its equipment. Most significant for the PLAN was the 1995 delivery of the first of four "K" (Kilo) class diesel-electric submarines from the Soviet Union. These modern submarines will give the PLAN added ASW capability, as a submarine is considered the best weapon against other submarines. The "K" is quieter and has a better ant-ship torpedo than the "R" submarine it is replacing.

Under Modern Conditions

In the early 1990s, the concept of the "People's War" in naval warfare was finally eliminated. In the post-Desert Storm era much Chinese military literature discussed modern and combined arms warfare. The purpose of a 10-ship naval exercise in the East China Sea was "to study and explore ways for coordinating various forces and raising the comprehensive naval defensibility under conditions of modern

warfare."³³ In March of 1993, the North Sea Fleet conducted its first ever Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) exercise using PLAN ships and submarines. The press article declared the importance of such exercises:

The counterattack between missile destroyers and submarines with high speed underwater maneuverability is an important mode of future naval battles. If China does not venture into this exclusion area {area of PLAN neglect} it will come to grief in a future war.³⁴

Emphasis on Territorial Claims

In the 1990s, the PRC has continued its insistence on its offshore territorial claims, especially in the South China Sea. On 25 February 1992, the PRC's National People's Congress passed the Law of the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone. This law formalized the PRC's claims to Taiwan, Macclesfield Bank (Zhongsha), the Senkaku (Diaoyu), Pescadores (Penghu), Pratas (Dongsha), Paracel (Xisha), and Spratly (Nansha) archipelagos (Figure 2). About three months later, the PRC announced that it had licensed a U.S. firm to explore for oil and gas in the disputed areas.

There has been recent evidence of a PRC military buildup in the South China Sea. A book published by the China Public Security Ministry revealed that the PRC is constructing a military air base in the Paracel Islands. This air base in the Paracels places Chinese military aircraft 190 miles closer to the Spratly Islands and allows Chinese aircraft the ability to provide increased coverage of the Spratly Islands region than aircraft based in the previous bases in Hainan.³⁵ If this base is capable of providing air support for possible actions in the Spratlys, The Chinese requirement for an aircraft carrier would be reduced.

Asian Naval Modernizations

Naval modernization Southeast Asian navies began in the late 1980s. Responding to varying internal and external influences, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia each began programs to upgrade their naval forces. Although there was little direct Chinese reaction to these modernizations programs, the Chinese did attempt to portray their own naval expenditures as non-threatening and of a defensive nature.

If the PRC showed little interest in Southeast Asian navies, the reverse was true of their attention to the Indian navy. In a 1993 report by the PLA's General Logistic Department, General Zhao Nanqi declared that India's development of a large navy was not acceptable to the Chinese and that the PRC was not going to let India dominate the Indian Ocean. He then proposed to increase the PLAN's presence in the Indian Ocean by conducting increased port calls in the region.³⁶ General Zhao is considered a possible successor as the PLA's second most senior officer, and in that position could wield great influence.³⁷

CHAPTER SIX
DEVELOPMENTAL INFLUENCES:
REVIEW, ANALYSIS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The previous chapters have detailed the development of the PLAN as a function of strategic, political, economic, and institutional influences. These influences affected the PLAN's strategy, doctrine, and force structure. This chapter will summarize past developmental influences, analyze the current influences, and determine how current influences will possibly affect the PLAN in the next twenty five years. A twenty-five year time period was chosen as this roughly corresponds to the useful life span of a front line naval combat ship. This review and analysis begins with the most overarching of the four influences..

Strategic Influences

Of the four developmental influences on the PLAN, the strategic influences have been the most consistent throughout its history. These strategic influences are listed by historical period in Table 8. Two strategic influences have remained relatively constant throughout the PLAN's history. It is these two enduring influences that have had the greatest strategic effect on the PLAN

The first of these key strategic influences is the PRC's fear of superpower encirclement and the associated superpower naval threat. For the majority of its history, the PLAN has been faced with an

encircling superpower threat, either U.S. or Soviet. For the first two and a half decades the U.S. was China's primary threat. In the 1970s, the Soviet Union supplanted the U.S. as China's major perceived threat. The Soviet threat retained its primacy until the mid to late 1980s and the threat was about eliminated with the fall of the Soviet Union. The presence of these superpower threats helped build consensus for increased naval spending. Around 1986, the PRC shifted its military focus from defense against superpower aggression to the conduct of local limited wars around the PRC's borders.

Table 8.--Strategic Influences on the PLAN

| PERIOD | SPECIFIC COMPONENT |
|-----------|--|
| TO 1959 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - U.S. NAVY IS PRIMARY THREAT - FEAR OF U.S. ENCIRCLEMENT - SOVIET ASSISTANCE - CHINESE TERRITORIAL CLAIMS |
| 1960-1971 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - U.S. NAVY IS PRIMARY THREAT - FEAR OF U.S. ENCIRCLEMENT - NO SOVIET ASSISTANCE - CHINESE TERRITORIAL CLAIMS |
| 1972-1982 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SOVIET NAVY BECOMES PRIMARY THREAT - CHINESE TERRITORIAL CLAIMS |
| 1983-1995 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SOVIET NAVY IS PRIMARY THREAT (TO 1986) - FEAR OF SOVIET ENCIRCLEMENT (TO 1986) - CHINESE TERRITORIAL CLAIMS |

Since 1992 the PLAN has been without a major superpower adversary. The Soviet Pacific Fleet has atrophied in Vladivostock while the U.S. Pacific Fleet has reduced its Western Pacific presence. Previously, the PLAN benefitted from the existence of an external

superpower naval threat. Additionally, the PLAN needed a threat to overcome a continental bias among the leadership. This traditional PRC land focus has now changed, as many CCP and national leaders now see the importance of maritime affairs.

The second constant strategic influence has been the PRC's territorial claims in the waters of Asia. Beginning with the 1950s capture of several near shore islands in the East China Sea and the Taiwan Strait the Chinese have striven to regain historic Chinese maritime territories. In the 1960s, the PRC continued to stress its claims to territories in the East China Sea, South China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait but was too absorbed in internal upheaval to do anything about them. In 1974, the PRC took advantage of a weakened South Vietnam and a disinterested U.S. by ousting the South Vietnamese from the Paracel Islands. Fourteen years later in 1988, PLAN ships sank three Vietnamese ships while occupying six positions in the Spratly Islands. In January, 1995, the PLAN occupied Mischief Reef in the Spratly Islands which was also claimed by the Republic of the Philippines.¹

This 45 year trend towards territorial acquisition along China's eastern maritime border has been an opportunistic campaign aimed against weak or isolated opposition. All the military moves to occupy islands have been taken against countries with weak or non-existent naval forces. The Chinese claims over Taiwan, Pescadores Islands, and Senkaku Islands have not been strenuously exercised as they would bring the PRC into conflict with countries with significant naval power (Taiwan and Japan).

Although not a continuous strategic influence, the effect of the 1950s Soviet assistance on the PLAN is significant enough to warrant discussion. This naval aid significantly helped the PLAN become a respectable coastal defense navy through Soviet ship, information, and technology transfers. The primary significance of this Soviet naval assistance was not hardware, but rather the export of the Soviet "Young School" naval doctrine that with modifications became the PLAN's doctrine and drove PLAN force structure for almost thirty years. Additionally, the abrupt end of Soviet assistance taught the PLAN the value of self-sufficiency. After the end of Soviet military assistance, the PRC was determined to develop itself with domestic resources. The PLAN retains this trait, 36 years after the split with the Soviet Union. The Chinese will buy selected military hardware to help develop ideas but will not make mass military purchases as that would indicate foreign dependence.

Political Influences

Political influences on the PLAN have had the most recent impact on the development of the navy. These political influences are shown, by period in Table 9. Throughout its history the PLAN as an institution has been subjected to less of the CCP's political influence and manipulation than China's ground forces. The PLAN has been able to stress professionalism over politics to a greater degree than the army.

Of all the branches of the PLA, the navy suffered the least interference from the CCP. The reasons for this are not clear. However, the CCP seemed content to keep the PLAN out of politics and the PLAN was content to build a facade of political orthodoxy to satisfy the

CCP. Historically, the PLAN lagged behind the army in the development of political culture and infrastructure. The Political Commissar system was inherited from the PLA and instituted immediately by naval shore based commands, but it was not until the early 1960s that most ships began receiving political officers. The Cultural Revolution's emphasis on strict obedience to Maoism and Mao military thought, forestalled the navy's attempts to develop a separate naval strategy and doctrine. Throughout the Cultural Revolution, the PLAN continued to build submarines, fast attack craft and aircraft. These were the light forces of the "Young School" and conformed with Mao's strategy of national defense and the navy's role as a coastal defense force.

Table 9.--Political Influences on the PLAN

| PERIOD | SPECIFIC COMPONENT |
|-----------|--|
| TO 1959 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PLAN HAS NO POLITBURO REPRESENTATIVE - EMPHASIS ON PROFESSIONALISM |
| 1960-1971 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CULTURAL REVOLUTION - NATIONAL EMPHASIS ON POLITICS |
| 1972-1982 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEATH OF MAO ZEDONG - REMOVAL OF GANG OF FOUR - RETURN OF DENG XIAOPING - MILITARY'S REDUCED POLITICAL ROLE |
| 1983-1995 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MILITARY'S REDUCED POLITICAL ROLE - EMPHASIS ON PROFESSIONALISM |

The PLAN's political influence in the CCP has been extremely limited. With the notable exception of Li Zuopeng's involvement in Lin Biao's coup attempt, the PLAN distanced itself from domestic political struggles. Li was the PLAN's first representative in the CCP Central

Committee Politburo (1969-1971). The PLAN did not participate in succession politics following Mao's death in 1976. Since the rise of the modernists, politics in the PLAN has become even less important. A PLAN officer was not admitted to the Politburo again until 1992, when Liu Huaqing was appointed.

For the past 15 years, the CCP faction favoring modernization of the military led by Deng Xiaoping has dominated over the political purists. By consent, the military's political role has been reduced and the military has been allowed to concentrate on modernization. The rise of the modernists over the Maoists allowed the military and the PLAN to modify Maoist military doctrine. The military has been able to again emphasize professionalism through the restoration of a rank structure, separate uniforms for the services, and increased emphasis on skill and military proficiency. The PLAN's naval strategy evolved from an army support role in the "Active Defense" strategy to a primary role in extending China's defensive perimeter seaward under the "Offshore Active Defense" strategy. The shift away from Mao's "People's War" doctrine has helped the technically oriented PLAN by encouraging the employment of advanced technologies in modern warfare.

Economic Influences

Economic influences have played a major role in the development of the PLAN. These influences are listed, by period in Table 10. The predominant economic influence in the early period of the PLAN's history was the backward Chinese economy. This economy placed constraints that inhibited the initial development of the PLAN. These constraints were

the lack of funds to build and maintain a navy, and the emphasis on agriculture and light industry over heavy industry.

With the rise of the Four Modernizations, came additional economic influences. This included an expanding economy, development of offshore resources, coastal development, and expansion of foreign trade. All of these influences had a positive impact on the PLAN. A growing economy could support an expanding navy. In 1984, Deng Xiaoping stated, "Quadrupling China's gross industrial and agricultural product means that by the end of this century, improving our military equipment will be an easy job."² The influences of coastal development and expanding foreign trade also benefitted the navy indirectly by focusing the Chinese leadership on maritime issues rather than interior development.

Table 10.--Economic Influences on the PLAN

| PERIOD | SPECIFIC COMPONENT |
|-----------|--|
| TO 1959 | - DEVASTATED ECONOMY |
| 1960-1971 | - ECONOMIC SCARCITY - EARLY FOCUS ON MARITIME RESOURCES |
| 1972-1982 | - FOUR MODERNIZATIONS - MARITIME RESOURCES - COASTAL DEVELOPMENT |
| 1983-1995 | - EXPANDING ECONOMY - MARITIME RESOURCES - COASTAL DEVELOPMENT |

Institutional Influences

The institutional influences remained relatively constant for the first 30 years of the PLAN but have changed significantly since

1983. These institutional influences are listed in Table 11. Dominant among these influences was the army's control over the PLAN. This army dominance was reduced in the 1980s.

Table 11.--Institutional Influences on the PLAN

| PERIOD | SPECIFIC COMPONENT |
|-----------|--|
| TO 1959 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- ARMY CONTROL OF PLAN- ROLE OF PENG DEHUAI- RISE OF PROFESSIONALISM (1953-1959) |
| 1960-1971 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- ARMY CONTROL OF PLAN- ROLE OF LIN BIAO- "PEOPLE'S WAR DOCTRINE" |
| 1972-1982 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- ARMY CONTROL OF PLAN- "PEOPLE'S WAR UNDER MODERN CONDITIONS" DOCTRINE |
| 1983-1995 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- ROLE OF LIU HUAQING- PLAN DIVERGES FROM ARMY- BEGINNING OF A SEPARATE NAVAL DOCTRINE |

Army domination of the PLAN began at the formation of the navy. Transferred army officers formed the core of the PLAN's initial leadership. Xiao Jinguang, a former army officer, commanded the PLAN for its first 31 years. The army was also dominant among the PLA's service branches because it was the oldest and most respected. It was the army that was victorious in the Civil War, not the navy or the air force. Third, army dominance forced the other branches into a supporting role. The navy's early strategy and doctrine were tied to the land based "People's War" doctrine.

Institutionally, army dominance of the navy began to wane in the late 1970s as military leaders saw serious weaknesses in the

"People's War" doctrine. This doctrine was modified to become "People's War Under Modern Conditions." The army dominance of the PLAN was severely weakened by the appointment of Liu Huaqing as the PLAN's commander in 1982. Liu Huaqing and his successor Zhang Lianzhong were the first naval officers to head the PLAN. During their tenure the navy accelerated the trend toward becoming an independent force.

The second major institutional influence on the PLAN was role of the Minister of Defense. This influence was particularly strong in the first two Ministers of Defense. The first, Peng Dehuai, emphasized a professional force developed along Soviet lines. The second, Lin Biao, stressed the political role of the military. These two military leaders, acting in opposite directions, had a big impact on the PLAN's strategy, doctrine, and force structure. Since Lin's fall from power, no Minister of Defense has accumulated enough power to provide the kind of impact that Peng and Lin had on the military.

Conclusions

Using previous and current influences to determine the PLAN's future can be risky. Unpredictable events have and will occur that could eliminate, alter, or replace old influences almost overnight. An example of this was Lin Biao's death and his subsequent repudiation. This section will assume away any dramatic unforeseen events and will review the developmental influences to determine how they may affect the PLAN into the year 2020. Important developmental influences to the PLAN of the future are summarized in Table 12.

Strategically, the PLAN is adjusting to a world in which there is no superpower threat to China. In the mid to late 1980s, the Chinese military began to change its focus from a defense of China from superpower invasion to the conduct of regional, limited wars along the exterior of China's border. This emphasis on external vice internal war, means that the PLAN will become a more important part of the Chinese military. Thus, the absence of a superpower threat will not cause a dramatic curtailment of the PLAN's modernization. On the contrary, the lack of a seaborne invasion threat will allow the future PLAN to shed its defensive orientation.

Table 12.-- Important Influences on the Future PLAN

| CATEGORY | SPECIFIC COMPONENT |
|---------------|---|
| STRATEGIC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NO SUPERPOWER NAVAL THREAT - CHINESE TERRITORIAL CLAIMS |
| POLITICAL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MILITARY'S ROLE IN CHOOSING DENG'S SUCCESSOR - EMPHASIS ON PROFESSIONALISM |
| ECONOMIC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EXPANDING ECONOMY - MARITIME RESOURCES - COASTAL DEVELOPMENT - INTERNATIONAL TRADE |
| INSTITUTIONAL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LIU HUAQING - INCREASED SPECIALIZATION |

The second strategic influence on the future PLAN is the PRC's continuing quest to recover lost territories and reverse the "Unequal Treaties" forced on China late in the European colonial era. Specifically, the PRC will solidify its control of the Spratly and

Paracel Islands as the countries directly in opposition to the PRC's drive to acquire island territories are divided on how to counter Chinese diplomatic and military moves in the South China Sea. Malaysia has recently distanced itself from a multi-lateral approach to solving the Spratly Island dispute. The PRC will consolidate its positions in the Spratly Islands by exploiting the weakness of the other claimants. This consolidation may also be accomplished by political agreement, because as Mao once said, "Political power grows out the end of a gun barrel." The PLAN will have become that gun barrel.

Territorial claims on Taiwan and the Senkaku Islands will not be pressed; as it would bring the PRC into conflict with two of Asia's strongest military and economic powers. The PRC - Taiwan issue will be allowed to slowly evolve towards interdependence. Also, the PRC leadership will be satisfied with the status quo over the Senkaku Islands. Therefore, PRC claims in these two areas will not influence the PLAN.

How will these current and long running strategic influences affect the PLAN in the future? This force will be capable of projecting and maintaining power within the area bounded by its island claims. However, there is no strategic imperative for the PLAN to acquire an aircraft carrier. The PLANAF will have sufficient ground based air cover to defend its island claims. The recent purchases of Soviet aircraft is the first step in developing aircraft with sufficient range to accomplish this mission. Additionally, a Chinese aircraft carrier would have many political drawbacks as many Asian countries and the United States would become alarmed by this prospect. Recently, the

PRC's Foreign Minister cited the PLAN's lack of an aircraft carrier as an example of China's peaceful intentions.³

The future political influences on the PLAN will be determined by the scope of the PLAN's involvement in succession politics after Deng Xiaoping. The military as a unifying force in China will have a large voice in the selection of the PRC's next leader. The military's objection to Deng's first heir apparent, Hu Yaobang, was among the causes for his dismissal as the CCP's secretary-general in January 1987.⁴ The PLAN, as an emerging force, will have different political goals from the ground forces. The political divergence between the army and the navy will force the navy to assume an expanded political role. This will be unfamiliar ground for a military branch that has traditionally escaped the realities of Chinese politics under the protection of the army.

The second political influence on the future of the PLAN is a continued emphasis on military professionalism. The perpetual struggle between political orthodoxy and military professionalism appears to have ended; with professionalism the clear winner. No future leader of the PRC will attempt to draw back from the substantial gains made by the navy in favor of reestablishing political primacy.

Dominating both strategic and political influences, economic influences will have the greatest impact on the future of the PLAN. A healthy, vibrant economy is vital to the continued expansion of the Chinese navy. Economic growth is the CCP's prime concern and history has demonstrated that in the event of an economic crisis, military expenditures will be frozen or even reduced. Ensuring the continued

expansion of the Chinese economy is becoming an increasingly difficult task. China is just beginning to confront the problem of simultaneously encouraging and managing economic growth, controlling inflation, and reducing unemployment. Another large problem for the Chinese economy is improving efficiency and ending government subsidies. An estimated 50 percent of China's 108,000 state enterprises are losing money. As these state enterprises account for about 55 percent of China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), this problem must be resolved to facilitate continued economic expansion.⁵

The second economic influence on the future of the PLAN is the quest for maritime resources such as oil and fish. The PLAN has committed itself to assisting in the development of the national economy. Historically, the PLAN has done this by aiding fishermen in distress and in the construction of oil infrastructure. State owned shipyards have also built offshore oil platforms in support of oil exploration and extraction efforts. The PLAN will continue this assistance in the quest for maritime resources.

The PRC has become a more maritime oriented nation partially as a result of its increased overseas commerce. Coastal economic development is related to this international trade and both are important to China's continued economic expansion. As the first line of defense of these important coastal regions, the PLAN will emerge as a more powerful branch of the military.

Institutionally, the trend towards military specialization will continue. If current trends continue, the PLAN will become a separate force in all but name. The navy will continue to develop and refine its

own maritime strategy and doctrine. The navy will most likely remain a part of the PLA structure, but it will no longer be influenced by a overpowering ground force component.

Possible Implications

The net result of all these influences, is that the PLAN in the year 2020 will have slowly evolved into a navy second to none in Asia. The PRC's goal, I believe, is to develop a strong naval force without antagonizing or alienating its neighbors. The PLAN will have not acquired an aircraft carrier unless Japan or a unified Korea has one. The reason for this is twofold, a PLAN aircraft carrier would unduly cause concern among Asia countries and the Chinese wish to avoid the Soviet mistake of placing military growth over economic growth. It is no coincidence that the Soviet Union's first conventional aircraft carrier was in construction at the time of the country's collapse.

By 2020, the PLAN will have achieved a rough technological parity with other modern navies. Its submarine force will be a mixture of nuclear powered submarines based on the navy's experience with the Han and Xia class submarines and diesel-electric powered submarines developed from the Soviet "K" class submarines first delivered in 1995. Entering service in the early 1980s and possessing improved endurance, weapons, and reduced self noise, the "K" is a significant upgrade for the PLAN submarine force consisting largely of obsolete "R" submarines.

China's growing technological sophistication along with reverse engineering of Soviet aircraft, will have made the PLANAF a modern airforce capable of defending any of the PRC's offshore claims. The PLAN surface ships by 2020, will have modern surface to air missiles for

self and area defense and will have land strike capability similar to the U.S. Navy's current Tomahawk Missile. The PLAN will have a modern command and control system capable of supporting long range operations.

Operationally, the PLAN in 2020 will have dramatically increased its visibility in Asia. It will conduct more port visits and establish more military to military contacts. The PLAN will conduct more out of area operations. By 2020, the sea area within China's island claims and especially around the Spratly and Paracel Islands will be considered a local operating area and will be the site of increased and near continuous PLAN presence. The PLAN will become a familiar, but not an overshadowing presence in the waters of the Western Pacific, East China Sea, Yellow Sea, and South China Sea.

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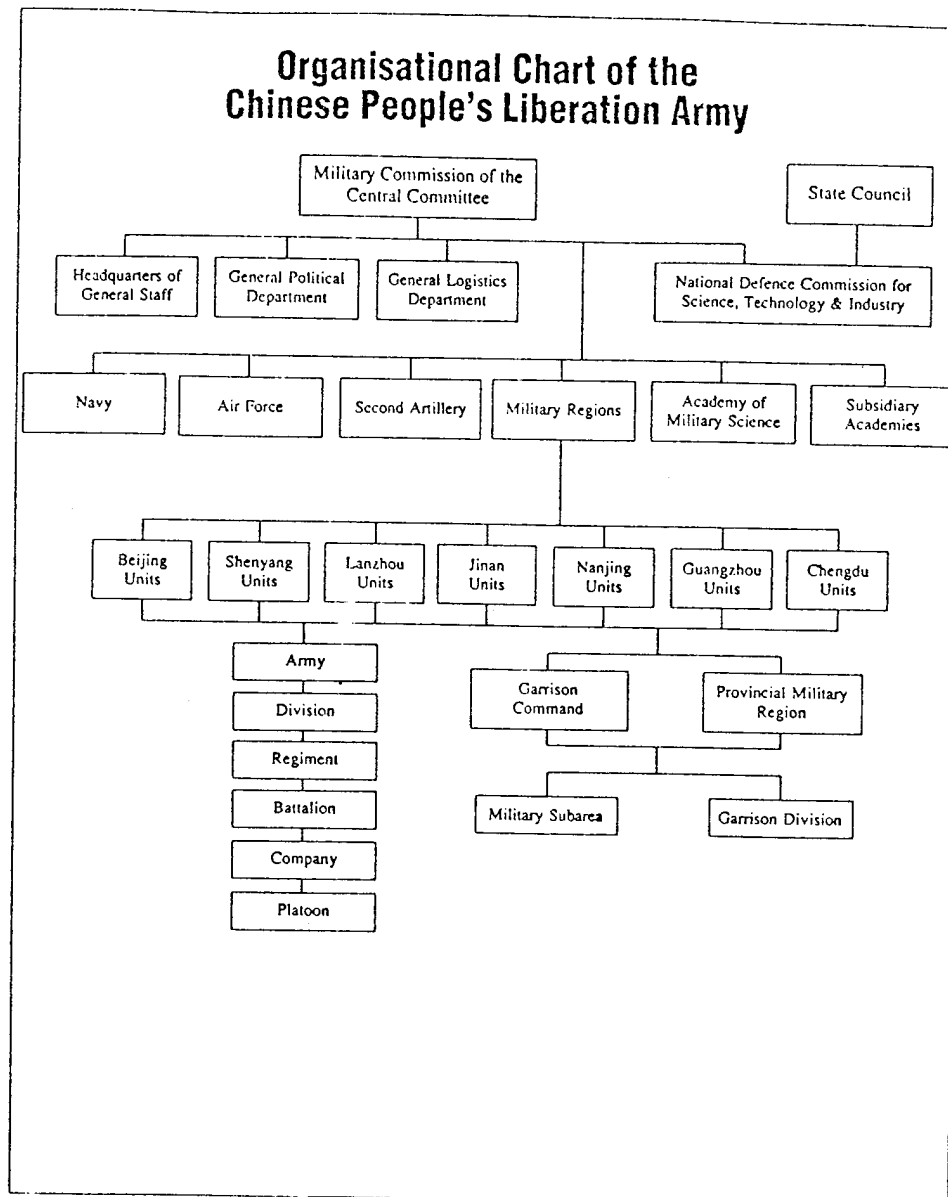
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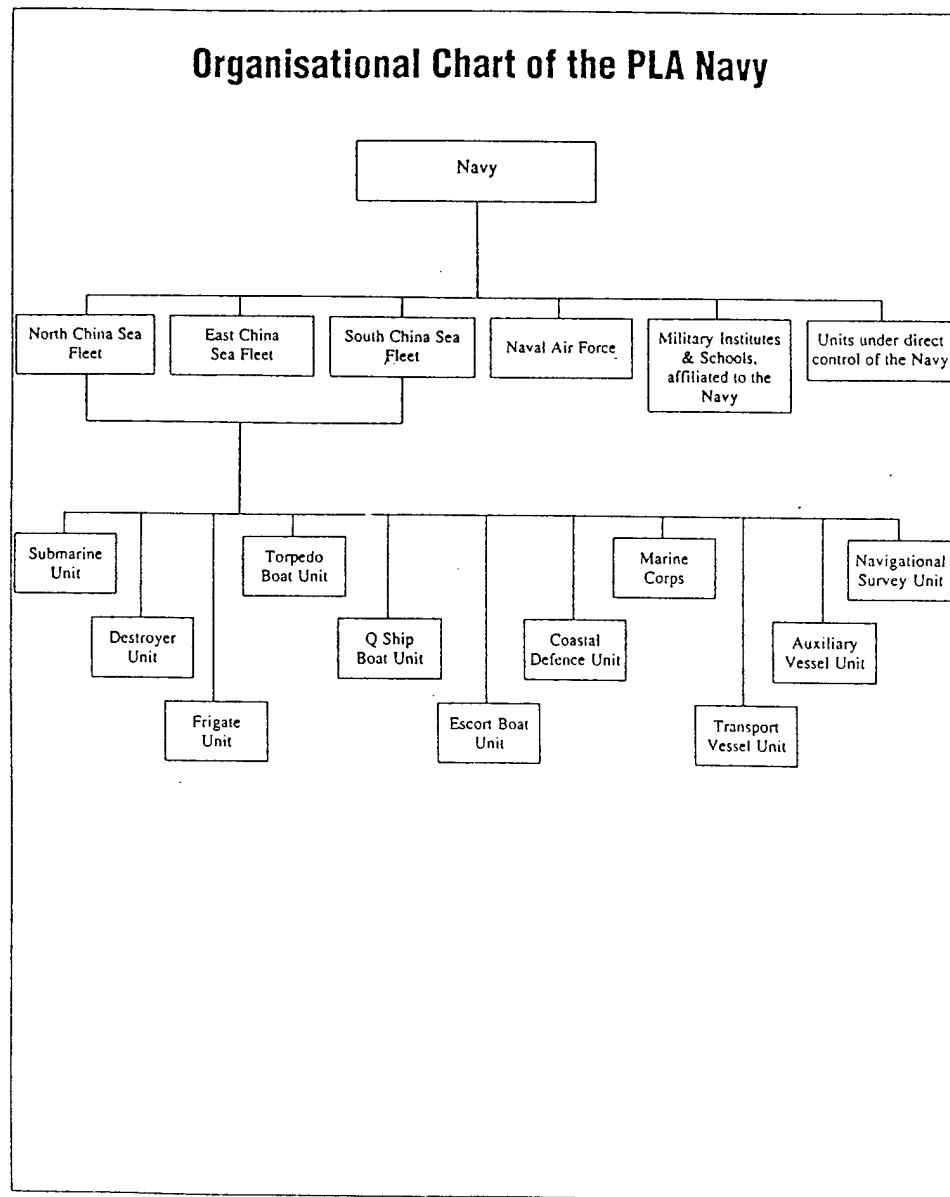
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APPENDIX B



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APPENDIX C
LEADERSHIP OF THE PLAN

PLAN COMMANDERS

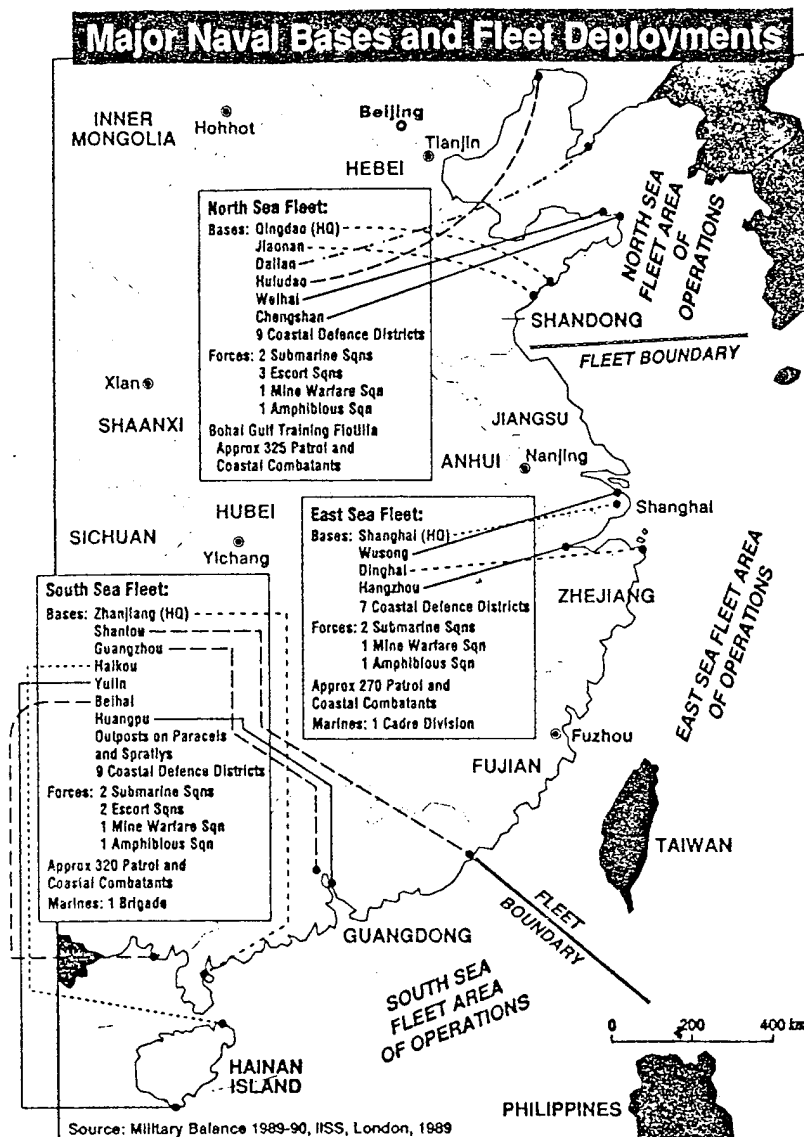
| | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| XIAO JINGUANG | JAN 1950 - JAN 1980 |
| YE FEI | JAN 1980 - AUG 1982 |
| LIU HUAQING | AUG 1982 - NOV 1987 |
| ZHANG LIANZHONG | NOV 1987 - PRESENT |

1ST POLITICAL COMMISSAR

| | |
|-------------|---------------------|
| SU ZHENHUA | FEB 1957 - JUN 1967 |
| LI ZUOPENG | JUN 1967 - SEP 1971 |
| SU ZHENHUA | MAY 1972 - FEB 1979 |
| YE FEI | FEB 1979 - JAN 1980 |
| LI YAOWEN | JAN 1981 - OCT 1993 |
| WEI JINSHAN | OCT 1993 - PRESENT |

APPENDIX D

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